Oss. 48.

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JAMES IMRAY'S

Pocket Edition of

Ossian's Poems.

Translated by James M.Pherson, Esq.r

with the Principal Dissertations on the

Æra and Poems of the Author.

VOL. I.

Superbly Embellished

Glasgow: Printed for James Imray. March 1799.

Vide Fingal, Book I. p. 2.

THE POEMS OF OSSIAN, THE *SON OF FINGAL.*

TRANSLATED BY
JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

To which are prefixed,
DISSERTATIONS ON THE ERA AND POEMS OF OSSIAN.

Imray's Edition.

We may boldly assign Ossian a place among those, whose works are to last for ages.

BLAIR.

And shalt thou remain, aged Bard! when the mighty have failed? But my fame shall remain, and grow like the oak of Morven; which lifts its broad head to the storm, and rejoices in the course of the wind.

BERRATHON.

VOL. I.

EMBELLISHED WITH SUPERB ENGRAVINGS.

GLASGOW:
Printed by Chapman and Lang,
FOR J. IMRAY, BOOKSELLER.
1799.

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OF SCOTLAND

OSSIAN's POEMS,

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

VOL. I.

CONTAINING

FINGAL,
COMALA,
THE WAR OF CAROS,
THE WAR OF INIS-THONA,
THE BATTLE OF LORA, and
CONLATH AND CUTHONA.

Bring, daughter of Toscar, bring the harp; the light of the song rises in Ossian's soul. It is like the field, when darkness covers the hills around, and the shadow grows slowly on the plain of the sun.

THE WAR OF CAROS.

GLASGOW:
Printed by Chapman and Lang,
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1799.

PREFACE.

IT is now above thirty years ſince this tranſlation of Oſſian's Poems has claimed the attention of the public. The univerſal admiration of all liberal and unprejudiced men, the only true criterion of literary merit, muſt now render every attempt to praiſe them futile and ſuperfluous.

In the year 1773, the tranſlator, Mr. Macpherſon, publiſhed a new edition with conſiderable alterations. In a Preface to this edition, he begins by informing the reader, that "he *ran* over the whole with attention." The reſt of the Preface might, without injury to his literary credit, be ſuffered to ſink peaceably into oblivion. He concludes, by informing us, that "a tranſlator, "who cannot equal his original, is incapable of expreſ-"ſing its beauties *." If we underſtand the meaning of this expreſſion, it ſeems to be, that Mr. Macpherſon poſſeſſes a degree of poetical genius not inferior to the original author; and we are the more diſpoſed to adopt this explanation, as he has, in other paſſages of this very Preface mentioned his own verſion, in terms of the higheſt ſelf-complacency; it has even been generally underſtood, on both ſides of the Tweed, that he wiſhed to keep the queſtion reſpecting the authenticity of theſe Poems in a ſort of oracular ſuſpence. This ſuſpicion is by no means ſtarted at preſent to ſerve a temporary

* In one of his Diſſertations alſo, we meet with the following extraordinary information, "Without vanity I ſay it, I think I could write tolerable poetry; and "I aſſure my antagoniſts, that I ſhould not tranſlate what I could not imitate."

purpoſe. We have had numerous opportunities of converſing on this ſubject with gentlemen who were intimately acquainted with the Galic language, and with ſeveral to whom the Poems of Oſſian were familiar, long before Mr. Macpherſon was born. Their ſentiments, with reſpect to his conduct, were uniform; and, upon every occaſion, they made no ſcruple of expreſſing their indignation at ſuch an inſtance of ungenerous and ungrateful ambiguity. It was to the tranſlation of theſe Poems, that Mr. Macpherſon was firſt indebted for diſtinction in the literary world. After the firſt publication, many cavils, for they cannot deſerve a better name, were thrown out reſpecting the reality of the exiſtence of the work in the Galic language. To extinguiſh every doubt of this nature, Dr. Blair collected a copious liſt of teſtimonies, tranſmitted by gentlemen of the firſt rank in the Highlands of Scotland. Theſe teſtimonies were re-printed in every ſubſequent edition, till that of 1773, when the tranſlator ſeems to have conceived the project of making the whole, or at leaſt a great part, of the poetry to be underſtood as his own compoſition. To accelerate this hopeful purpoſe, he ſuppreſſed the teſtimonies which we have juſt now mentioned; at leaſt we can conjecture no other motive for ſuch an ill-timed and injudicious mutilation. We have been careful to inſert them here.

Another part of this Preface which deſerves notice, is the following ſentence. "One of the chief improve-
"ments in this edition, is the care taken in arranging
"the Poems *in the order of time;* ſo as to form a kind of
"regular hiſtory of the age to which they relate." We may venture to aſſert, that there is not, in the Engliſh language, a paragraph in more direct oppoſition to truth. For example, the two Poems of Lathmon and Oithona, are as cloſely connected as the firſt and ſecond books of Homer's Iliad, for the latter of theſe pieces is merely a continuation of the former, and accordingly in all the editions of this verſion, preceding that of 1773, theſe two Poems are printed together, and in their pro-

per hiſtorical order; but in this new edition, the Poem of Oithona is printed near the beginning of the work, and that of Lathmon, which ought to have preceded it, is inſerted at an immenſe diſtance, and almoſt in the very rear of the collection. What is not leſs ridiculous, both theſe Poems ought to have been inſerted among the firſt in order, as they narrate ſome of the moſt early military exploits of the venerable and admirable bard of Morven. The Poem of Darthula is merely a ſequel to that entitled the Death of Cuchullin, and as ſuch, was inſerted in its proper place in all the former editions. In this laſt one, it *precedes* the Death of Cuchullin, which is a mere contradiction. "The Battle of Lora" ought to have ſucceeded immediately to *the Poem of Fingal*, as it contains an expreſs reference to the Iriſh expedition of Swaran, as a recent event. Inſtead of this, three different pieces intervene. We have firſt the Poem of Fingal, in which Oſcar, the ſon of Oſſian, performs a diſtinguiſhed part. We have next Lathmon, which records a tranſaction that happened before Oſcar was born; and then, after the inſertion of two other pieces, not leſs miſplaced, we are preſented with the *Battle of Lora*.

We have thought it neceſſary to hazard theſe remarks upon the alleged improvement in the arrangement of this edition of the Poems of Oſſian in 1773, as a ſufficient vindication of our conduct in declining to adopt it. As in the firſt edition of the Poems but little attention had been paid to chronological order, it might have been propoſed to claſs the poetry in a *third* ſeries. But many objects which are ſpecious at a diſtant view, aſſume an oppoſite appearance upon a cloſer inſpection. Such a meaſure would have been ſetting an example of fanciful variation before every future editor. We have therefore thought it better to reſtore the Poems to their primitive arrangement. In particular, we ſaw the moſt ſtriking propriety in replacing the Poem of Fingal at the head of the collection. Fingal himſelf is the great hero of the whole work, and in this piece we have an

epiſode deſcribing ſome of the firſt exploits of his youth, and his paſſion for Agandecca, "the firſt of his loves." In the ſame Poem, Oſſian, with a ſtrange mixture of tenderneſs and ferocity, deſcribes his courtſhip with Everallin, the mother of Oſcar; and, in ſhort, there is no ſingle Poem in the whole collection which affords ſuch a general introduction to the characters and incidents deſcribed in the reſt.

As to the improvement in the ſtyle of the edition of 1773, we cannot coincide with the ſentiments of the tranſlator. The elegant ſimplicity of the former verſion, is often ſtrained into abſolute diſtortion. In two or three paſſages where we judged that the late alterations in the text had heightened its beauty, they have been preſerved; but, in general, they are far inferior, and ſeldom or never preferable to the original tranſlation. This point, however, we muſt leave to the taſte of the reader.

We have reſtored to this edition a Poem of conſiderable length, and of diſtinguiſhed beauty, which has been unaccountably ſuppreſſed by Mr. Macpherſon in his edition of 1773, though, as it had been quoted in the Elements of Criticiſm, by Lord Kames, its abſence muſt have made a very ſenſible blank.

Mr. Macpherſon has obliged us with a Diſſertation concerning the Æra of Oſſian and that nothing, however trifling, might be wanting, we have inſerted it. The importance of this Diſſertation may be completely aſcertained in a very few words. He tells us, that in the year of Chriſt 211, Fingal, at the head of a Caledonian army, gave battle to Caracul the ſon of Severus, Emperor of Rome. At this time, we muſt ſuppoſe that Fingal was at leaſt twenty years of age. He likewiſe tells us, that Oſcar, the grandſon of Fingal, engaged and defeated Carauſius, who, in the year 287, had ſeized the government of Britain. At the time of this ſecond battle therefore, Fingal, if alive, muſt have been at the advanced age of ninety-ſix. Now, the Poem of Temora opens with the death of Oſcar, and cloſes with

the death of Cathmor, the Iriſh General, whom Fingal, after rallying the routed Caledonians, and diſplaying prodigies of valour, kills with his own hand. Theſe are ſtrange performances for a man at the age of an hundred. Both ends of this hypotheſis have been embraced by Lord Kames and Mr. Whitaker, and thus has the æra of Oſſian been *aſcertained*.

With reſpect to this edition, we have little to ſay. Of an elegant type, ſuperb engravings, and a ſuperfine paper, the reader is an equal judge with ourſelves; nor can it be a circumſtance unfavourable to our publication, that the Book is now to be ſold at leſs than half of the price of any former edition.

APRIL, 1799.

A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

INQUIRIES into the antiquities of nations afford more pleaſure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form ſyſtems of hiſtory on probabilities and a few facts; but at a great diſtance of time, their accounts muſt be vague and uncertain. The infancy of ſtates and kingdoms is as deſtitute of great events, as of the means of tranſmitting them to poſterity. The arts of poliſhed life, by which alone facts can be preſerved with certainty, are the productions of a well-formed community. It is then hiſtorians begin to write, and public tranſactions to be worthy remembrance. The actions of former times are left in obſcurity, or magnified by uncertain traditions. Hence it is that we find ſo much of the marvellous in the origin of every nation; poſterity being always ready to believe any thing, however fabulous, that reflects honour on their anceſtors. The Greeks and Romans were remarkable for this weakneſs. They ſwallowed the moſt abſurd fables concerning the high antiquities of their reſpective nations. Good hiſtorians, however, roſe very early amongſt them, and tranſmitted, with luſtre, their great actions to poſterity. It is to them that they owe that unrivalled fame they now enjoy, while the great actions of other nations are involved in fables, or loſt in obſcurity. The Celtic nations afford a ſtriking inſtance of this kind. They, though once the maſters of Eu-

rope from the mouth of the river Oby†, in Ruſſia, to Cape Finiſtere, the weſtern point of Gallicia in Spain, are very little mentioned in hiſtory. They truſted their fame to tradition and the ſongs of their bards, which, by the viciſſitude of human affairs, are long ſince loſt. Their ancient language is the only monument that remains of them: and the traces of it being found in places ſo widely diſtant from each other, ſerves only to ſhew the extent of their ancient power, but throws very little light on their hiſtory.

Of all the Celtic nations, that which poſſeſſed old Gaul is the moſt renowned; not perhaps on account of worth ſuperior to the reſt, but for their wars with a people who had hiſtorians to tranſmit the fame of their enemies, as well as their own, to poſterity. Britain was firſt peopled by them, according to the teſtimoy of the beſt authors‖; its ſituation in reſpect to Gaul makes the opinion probable; but what puts it beyond all diſpute, is, that the ſame cuſtoms and language prevailed among the inhabitants of both in the days of Julius Cæſar¶.

The colony from Gaul poſſeſſed themſelves, at firſt, of that part of Britain which was next to their own country; and ſpreading northward, by degrees, as they increaſed in numbers, peopled the whole iſland. Some adventurers paſſing over from thoſe parts of Britain that are within ſight of Ireland, were the founders of the Iriſh nation: Which is a more probable ſtory than the idle fables of Mileſian and Gallician colonies. Diodorus Siculus* mentions it as a thing well known in his time, that the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons; and his teſtimony is unqueſtionable, when we conſider, that for many ages, the language and cuſtoms of both nations were the ſame.

Tacitus was of opinion that the ancient Caledonians were of German extract. By the language and cuſtoms which always prevailed in the north of Scotland, and which are undoubtedly Celtic, one would be

† Plin. l. 6. ‖ Cæſ. l. 5. Tac. Agric. L 1. c. 2. ¶ Cæſ. Pomp. Mel. Tacitus.
* Diod. Sic. l. 5.

tempted to differ in opinion from that celebrated writer. The Germans, properly ſo called, were not the ſame with the ancient Celtæ. The manners and cuſtoms of the two nations were ſimilar; but their language different. The Germans† are the genuine deſcendants of the ancient Daæ, afterwards well known by the name of Daci, and paſſed originally into Europe by the way of the northern countries, and ſettled beyond the Danube, towards the vaſt regions of Tranſilvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia; and from thence advanced by degrees into Germany. The Celtæ‖, it is certain, ſent many colonies into that country, all of whom retained their own laws, language and cuſtoms; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were deſcended.

But whether the Caledonians were a colony of the Celtic Germans, or the ſame with the Gauls that firſt poſſeſſed themſelves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this diſtance of time. Whatever their origin was, we find them very numerous in the time of Julius Agricola, which is a preſumption that they were long before ſettled in the country. The form of their government was a mixture of ariſtocracy and monarchy, as it was in all the countries where the druids bore the chief ſway. This order of men ſeems to have been formed on the ſame ſyſtem with the Dactyli, Idæi and Curetes of the ancients. Their pretended intercourſe with heaven, their magic and divinations were the ſame. The knowledge of the druids in natural cauſes, and the properties of certain things, the fruit of the experiments of ages, gained them a mighty reputation among the people. The eſteem of the populace ſoon increaſed into a veneration for the order; which a cunning and ambitious tribe of men took care to improve, to ſuch a degree, that they in a manner, ingroſſed the management of civil, as well as religious, matters. It is generally allowed that they did not abuſe this extraordinary power; the pre-

† Strabo, l. 7. ‖ Cæſ. l. 6. Liv. l. 5. Tac. de mor. Germ.

ſerving their character of ſanctity was ſo eſſential to their influence, that they never broke out into violence or oppreſſion. The chiefs were allowed to execute the laws, but the legiſlative power was entirely in the hands of the druids†. It was by their authority that the tribes were united, in times of the greateſt danger under one head. This temporary king, or Vergobretus‖, was choſen by them, and generally laid down his office at the end of the war. Theſe prieſts enjoyed long this extraordinary privilege among the Celtic nations who lay beyond the pale of the Roman empire. It was in the beginning of the ſecond century that their power among the Caledonians began to decline. The Poems that celebrate Trathal and Cormac, anceſtors to Fingal, are full of particulars concerning the fall of the druids, which account for the total ſilence concerning their religion in the Poems that are now given to the public.

The continual wars of the Caledonians againſt the Romans, hindered the nobility from initiating themſelves, as the cuſtom formerly was, into the order of the druids. The precepts of their religion were confined to a few, and were not much attended to by a people inured to war. The Vergobretus, or chief magiſtrate, was choſen without the concurrence of the hierarchy, or continued in his office againſt their will. Continual power ſtrengthened his intereſt among the tribes, and enabled him to ſend down, as hereditary to his poſterity, the office he had only received himſelf by election.

On occaſion of a new war againſt the *King of the World*, as the Poems emphatically call the Roman emperor, the druids, to vindicate the honour of the order, began to reſume their ancient privilege of chuſing the Vergobretus. Garmal, the ſon of Tarno, being deputed by them, came to the grandfather of the celebrated Fingal, who was then Vergobretus, and commanded him, in the name of the whole order, to lay down his office. Upon his refuſal, a civil war commenced, which

† Cæſ. l. 6. ‖ Fer-gubreth, 'the man to judge.'

ſoon ended in almoſt the total extinction of the religious order of the druids. A few that remained, retired to the dark receſſes of their groves, and the caves they had formerly uſed for their meditations. It is then we find them in *the circle of ſtones*, and unheeded by the world. A total diſregard for the order and utter abhorrence of the druidical rites enſued. Under this cloud of public hate, all that had any knowledge of the religion of the druids became extinct, and the nation fell into the laſt degree of ignorance of their rites and ceremonies.

It is no matter of wonder then, that Fingal and his ſon Oſſian make ſo little, if any, mention of the druids, who were the declared enemies to their ſucceſſion in the ſupreme magiſtracy. It is a ſingular caſe, it muſt be allowed, that there are no traces of religion in the Poems aſcribed to Oſſian; as the poetical compoſitions of other nations are ſo cloſely connected with their mythology. It is hard to account for it to thoſe who are not made acquainted with the manner of the old Scottiſh bards. That race of men carried their notions of martial honour to an extravagant pitch. Any aid given their heroes in battle, was thought to derogate from their fame; and the bards immediately transferred the glory of the action to him who had given that aid.

Had Oſſian brought down gods, as often as Homer hath done to aſſiſt his heroes, this Poem had not conſiſted of eulogiums on his friends, but of hymns to theſe ſuperior beings. To this day, thoſe that write in the Galic language ſeldom mention religion in their profane poetry; and when they profeſſedly write of religion, they never interlard with their compoſitions, the actions of their heroes. This cuſtom alone, even though the religion of the druids had not been previouſly extinguiſhed, may, in ſome meaſure, account for Oſſian's ſilence concerning the religion of his own times.

To ſay that a nation is void of all religion, is the ſame thing as to ſay, that it does not conſiſt of people endued with reaſon. The traditions of their fathers,

and their own obſervations on the works of nature, together with that ſuperſtition which is inherent in the human frame, have, in all ages, raiſed in the minds of men ſome idea of a ſuperior being. Hence it is, that in the darkeſt times, and amongſt the moſt barbarous nations, the very populace themſelves had ſome faint notion, at leaſt, of a divinity. It would be doing injuſtice to Oſſian, who, upon no occaſion, ſhews a narrow mind, to think that he had not opened his conceptions to that primitive and greateſt of all truths. But let Oſſian's religion be what it will, it is certain he had no knowledge of Chriſtianity, as there is not the leaſt alluſion to it, or any of its rites, in his Poems; which abſolutely fixes him to an æra prior to the introduction of that religion. The perſecution begun by Diocleſian, in the year 303, is the moſt probable time in which the firſt dawning of Chriſtianity in the north of Britain can be fixed. The humane and mild character of Conſtantius Chlorus, who commanded then in Britain, induced the perſecuted Chriſtians to take refuge under him. Some of them, through a zeal to propagate their tenets, or thro' fear, went beyond the pale of the Roman empire, and ſettled among the Caledonians; who were the more ready to hearken to their doctrines, as the religion of the druids had been exploded ſo long before.

Theſe miſſionaries, either through choice, or to give more weight to the doctrine they advanced, took poſſeſſion of the cells and groves of the druids; and it was from this retired life they had the name of *Culdees*†, which in the language of the country ſignified *ſequeſtered perſons*. It was with one of the *Culdees* that Oſſian, in his extreme old age, is ſaid to have diſputed concerning the Chriſtian religion. This diſpute is ſtill extant, and is couched in verſe, according to the cuſtom of the times. The extreme ignorance on the part of Oſſian, of the Chriſtian tenets, ſhews, that that religion had only been lately introduced, as it is not eaſy to conceive, how one of the

† Culdich.

firſt rank could be totally unacquainted with a religion that had been known for any time in the country. The diſpute bears the genuine mark of antiquity. The obſolete phraſes and expreſſions peculiar to the times, prove it to be no forgery. If Oſſian then lived at the introduction of Chriſtianity, as by all appearance he did, his epoch will be the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century. What puts this point beyond diſpute, is the alluſion in his Poems to the hiſtory of the times.

The exploits of Fingal againſt Caracul†, the ſon of the *King of the World*, are among the firſt brave actions of his youth. A complete Poem, which relates to this ſubject, is printed in this collection.

In the year 210 the emperor Severus, after returning from his expeditions againſt the Caledonians, at York, fell into the tedious illneſs of which he afterwards died. The Caledonians and Maiatæ, reſuming courage from his indiſpoſition, took arms in order to recover the poſſeſſions they had loſt. The enraged emperor commanded his army to march into their country, and to deſtroy it with fire and ſword. His orders were but ill executed, for his ſon, Caracalla, was at the head of the army, and his thoughts were entirely taken up with the hopes of his father's death, and with ſchemes to ſupplant his brother Geta. He ſcarcely had entered the enemy's country, when news was brought him that Severus was dead. A ſudden peace is patched up with the Caledonians, and, as it appears from Dion Caſſius, the country they had loſt to Severus was reſtored to them.

The Caracul of Fingal is no other than Caracalla, who, as the ſon of Severus, the emperor of Rome, whoſe dominions were extended almoſt over the known world, was not without reaſon called in the Poems of Oſſian, *the ſon of the King of the World.* The ſpace of time between 211, the year Severus died, and the beginning of the fourth century, is not ſo great, but Oſſian the ſon of

† Carac'huil, 'terrible eye.' Carac'healla, 'terrible look.' Carac'challamh, 'a ſort of upper garment.'

Fingal, might have ſeen the Chriſtians whom the perſecution under Diocleſian had driven beyond the pale of the Roman empire.

Oſſian, in one of his many lamentations on the death of his beloved ſon Oſcar, mentions among his great actions, a battle which he fought againſt Caros, king of ſhips, on the banks of the winding Carun†. It is more than probable, that the Caros mentioned here, is the ſame with the noted uſurper Carauſius, who aſſumed the purple in the year 287, and ſeizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius, in ſeveral naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called in Oſſian's Poems, *the King of Ships*. The *winding Carun* is that ſmall river retaining ſtill the name of Carron, and runs in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, which Carauſius repaired to obſtruct the incurſions of the Caledonians. Several other paſſages in the Poems allude to the wars of the Romans; but the two juſt mentioned clearly fix the epoch of Fingal to the third century; and this account agrees exactly with the Iriſh hiſtories, which place the death of Fingal, the ſon of Comhal, in the year 283, and that of Oſcar and their own celebrated Cairbar, in the year 296.

Some people may imagine, that the alluſions to the Roman hiſtory might have been induſtriouſly inſerted into the Poems, to give them the appearance of antiquity. This fraud muſt then have been committed at leaſt three ages ago, as the paſſages in which the alluſions are made, are alluded to often in the compoſitions of thoſe times.

Every one knows what a cloud of ignorance and barbariſm overſpread the north of Europe three hundred years ago. The minds of men, addicted to ſuperſtition, contracted a narrowneſs that deſtroyed genius. Accordingly we find the compoſitions of thoſe times trivial and puerile to the laſt degree. But let it be allowed, that, amidſt all the untoward circumſtances of the age,

† Car-raron, 'winding river.'

a genius might arife, it is not eafy to determine what could induce him to give the honour of his compofitions to an age fo remote. We find no fact that he has advanced to favour any defigns which could be entertained by any man who lived in the fifteenth century. But fhould we fuppofe a poet, through humour, or for reafons which cannot be feen at this diftance of time, would afcribe his own compofitions to Offian, it is next to impoffible, that he could impofe upon his countrymen, when all of them were fo well acquainted with the traditional Poems of their anceftors.

The ftrongeft objection to the authenticity of the Poems now given to the public under the name of Offian, is the improbability of their being handed down by tradition through fo many centuries. Ages of barbarifm, fome will fay, could not produce Poems abounding with the difintereffted and generous fentiments fo confpicuous in the compofitions of Offian; and could thefe ages produce them, it is impoffible but they muft be loft, or altogether corrupted in a long fucceffion of barbarous generations.

Thefe objections naturally fuggeft themfelves to men unacquainted with the ancient ftate of the northern parts of Britain. The bards, who were an inferior order of the druids, did not fhare their bad fortune. They were fpared by the victorious king, as it was through their means only he could hope for immortality to his fame. They attended him in the camp, and contributed to eftablifh his power by their fongs. His great actions were magnified, and the populace, who had no ability to examine into his character narrowly, were dazzled with his fame in the rhymes of the bards. In the mean time, men aflumed the fentiments that are rarely to be met with in an age of barbarifm. The bards, who were originally the difciples of the druids, had their minds opened, and their ideas enlarged, by being initiated in the learning of that celebrated order. They could form a perfect hero in their own minds, and afcribe that character to their prince. The inferior chiefs

made this ideal character the model of their conduct, and by degrees brought their minds to that generous ſpirit which breathes in all the poetry of the times. The prince, flattered by his bards, and rivalled by his own heroes, who imitated his character as deſcribed in the eulogies of his poets, endeavoured to excel his people in merit, as he was above them in ſtation. This emulation continuing, formed at laſt the general character of the nation, happily compounded of what is noble in barbarity, and virtuous and generous in a poliſhed people.

When virtue in peace, and bravery in war, are the characteriſtics of a nation, their actions become intereſting, and their fame worthy of immortality. A generous ſpirit is warmed with noble actions, and becomes ambitious of perpetuating them. This is the true ſource of that divine inſpiration, to which the poets of all ages pretended. When they found their themes inadequate to the warmth of their imaginations, they varniſhed them over with fables, ſupplied by their own fancy, or furniſhed by abſurd traditions. Theſe fables, however ridiculous, had their abettors; poſterity either implicitly believed them, or through a vanity natural to mankind, pretended that they did. They loved to place the founders of their families in the days of fable, when poetry, without the fear of contradiction, could give what characters ſhe pleaſed of her heroes. It is to this vanity that we owe the preſervation of what remain of the works of Oſſian. His poetical merit made his heroes famous in a country where heroiſm was moſt eſteemed and admired. The poſterity of theſe heroes, or thoſe who pretended to be deſcended from them, heard with pleaſure the eulogiums of their anceſtors; bards were employed to repeat the Poems, and to record the connection of their patrons with chiefs ſo renowned. Every chief in proceſs of time had a bard in his family, and the office became at laſt hereditary. By the ſucceſſion of theſe bards, the Poems concerning the anceſtors of the family were handed down from generation to gene-

ration; they were repeated to the whole clan on ſolemn occaſions, and always alluded to in the new compoſitions of the bards. This cuſtom came down near to our own times; and after the bards were diſcontinued, a great number in a clan retained by memory, or committed to writing, their compoſitions, and founded the antiquity of their families on the authority of their Poems.

The uſe of letters was not known in the north of Europe till long after the inſtitution of the bards; the records of the families of their patrons, their own, and more ancient Poems, were handed down by tradition. Their poetical compoſitions were admirably contrived for that purpoſe. They were adapted to muſic; and the moſt perfect harmony obſerved. Each verſe was ſo connected with thoſe which preceded or followed it, that if one line had been remembered in a ſtanza, it was almoſt impoſſible to forget the reſt. The cadences followed in ſo natural a gradation, and the words were ſo adapted to the common turn of the voice, after it is raiſed to a certain key, that it was almoſt impoſſible, from a ſimilarity of ſound, to ſubſtitute one word for another. This excellence is peculiar to the Celtic tongue, and is perhaps to be met with in no other language. Nor does this choice of words clog the ſenſe, or weaken the expreſſion. The numerous flections of conſonants, and variation in declenſion, make the language very copious.

The deſcendants of the Celtæ, who inhabited Britain and its iſles, were not ſingular in this method of preſerving the moſt precious monuments of their nation. The ancient laws of the Greeks were couched in verſe, and handed down by tradition. The Spartans, through a long habit, became ſo fond of this cuſtom, that they would never allow their laws to be committed to writing. The actions of great men, and the eulogiums of kings and heroes were preſerved in the ſame manner. All the hiſtorical monuments of the old Germans were

comprehended in their ancient ſongs†; which were either hymns to their gods, or elegies in praiſe of their heroes, and were intended to perpetuate the great events in their nations which were carefully interwoven with them. This ſpecies of compoſition was not committed to writing, but delivered by oral tradition‖. The care they took to have the Poems taught to their children, the uninterrupted cuſtom of repeating them upon certain occaſions, and the happy meaſure of the verſe, ſerved to preſerve them for a long time uncorrupted. This oral chronicle of the Germans was not forgot in the eighth century, and it probably would have remained to this day, had not learning, which thinks every thing, that is not committed to writing, fabulous, been introduced. It was from poetical traditions that Garcillaſſo compoſed his account of the Yncas of Peru. The Peruvians had loſt all other monuments of their hiſtory, and it was from ancient Poems which his mother, a princeſs of the blood of the Yncas, taught him in his youth, that he collected the materials of his hiſtory. If other nations then, that had been often over-run by enemies, and had ſent abroad and received colonies, could, for many ages, preſerve, by oral tradition, their laws and hiſtories uncorrupted, it is much more probable that the ancient Scots, a people ſo free of intermixture with foreigners, and ſo ſtrongly attached to the memory of their anceſtors, had the works of their bards handed down with great purity.

It will ſeem ſtrange to ſome, that Poems admired for many centuries in one part of this kingdom ſhould be hitherto unknown in the other; and that the Britiſh, who have carefully traced out the works of genius in other nations, ſhould ſo long remain ſtrangers to their own. This, in a great meaſure, is to be imputed to thoſe who underſtood both languages and never attempted a tranſlation. They, from being acquainted but with detached pieces, or from a modeſty, which

† Tacitus de. mor. Germ.

‖ Abbe de la Bieterie Remarques ſur la Germaiae.

perhaps the preſent tranſlator ought, in prudence, to have followed, deſpaired of making the compoſitions of their bards agreeable to an Engliſh reader. The manner of thoſe compoſitions is ſo different from other Poems, and the ideas ſo confined to the moſt early ſtate of ſociety, that it was thought they had not enough of variety to pleaſe a poliſhed age.

This was long the opinion of the tranſlator of the following collection; and though he admired the Poems, in the original, very early, and gathered part of them from tradition for his own amuſement, yet he never had the ſmalleſt hopes of ſeeing them in an Engliſh dreſs. He was ſenſible that the ſtrength and manner of both languages were very different, and that it was next to impoſſible to tranſlate the Galic poetry in any thing of tolerable Engliſh verſe; a proſe tranſlation he could never think of, as it muſt neceſſarily fall ſhort of the majeſty of an original. It was a gentleman, who has himſelf made a figure in the poetical world, that gave him the firſt hint concerning a literal proſe tranſlation. He tried it at his deſire, and the ſpecimen was approved. Other gentlemen were earneſt in exhorting him to bring more to the light, and it is to their uncommon zeal that the world owes the Galic Poems, if they have any merit.

It was at firſt intended to make a general collection of all the ancient pieces of genius to be found in the Galic language; but the tranſlator had his reaſons for confining himſelf to the remains of the works of Oſſian. The action of the Poem that ſtands the firſt, was not the greateſt or moſt celebrated of the exploits of Fingal. His wars were very numerous, and each of them afforded a theme which employed the genius of his ſon. But, excepting the preſent Poem, thoſe pieces are irrecoverably loſt, and there only remain a few fragments in the hands of the tranſlator. Tradition has ſtill preſerved, in many places, the ſtory of the Poems, and many now living have heard them in their youth, repeated.

The complete work, now printed, would in a ſhort time, have ſhared the fate of the reſt. The genius of the Highlanders has ſuffered a great change within theſe few years. The communication with the reſt of the iſland is open, and the introduction of trade and manufactures has deſtroyed that leiſure which was formerly dedicated to hearing and repeating the Poems of ancient times. Many have now learned to leave their mountains, and ſeek their fortunes in a milder climate; and though a certain *amor patriæ* may ſometimes bring them back, they have, during their abſence, imbibed enough of foreign manners to deſpiſe the cuſtoms of their anceſtors. Bards have been long diſuſed, and the ſpirit of genealogy has greatly ſubſided. Men begin to be leſs devoted to their chiefs, and conſanguinity is not ſo much regarded. When property is eſtabliſhed, the human mind confines its views to the pleaſure it procures. It does not go back to antiquity, or look forward to ſucceeding ages. The cares of life increaſe, and the actions of other times no longer amuſe. Hence it is, that the taſte for their ancient poetry is at a low ebb among the Highlanders. They have not, however, thrown off the good qualities of their anceſtors. Hoſpitality ſtill ſubſiſts, and an uncommon civility to ſtrangers. Friendſhip is inviolable, and revenge leſs blindly followed than formerly.

To ſay any thing, concerning the poetical merit of the Poems, would be an anticipation on the judgment of the public. The Poem which ſtands firſt in the collection is truly epic. The characters are ſtrongly marked, and the ſentiments breathe heroiſm. The ſubject of it is an invaſion of Ireland by Swaran king of Lochlin, which is the name of Scandinavia in the Galic language. Cuchullin, general of the Iriſh tribes in the minority of Cormac king of Ireland, upon intelligence of the invaſion, aſſembled his forces near Tura, a caſtle on the coaſt of Ulſter. The Poem opens with the landing of Swaran, councils are held, battles fought, and Cuchullin is, at laſt, totally defeated. In the mean time,

Fingal, king of Scotland, whoſe aid was ſolicited before the enemy landed, arrived and expelled them from the country. This war, which continued but ſix days and as many nights, is, including the epiſodes, the whole ſtory of the Poem. The ſcene is the heath of Lena near a mountain called Cromleah in Ulſter.

All that can be ſaid of the tranſlation, is, that it is literal, and that ſimplicity is ſtudied. The arrangement of the words in the original is imitated, and the inverſions of the ſtyle obſerved. As the tranſlator claims no merit from his verſion, he hopes for the indulgence of the public where he fails. He wiſhes that the imperfect ſemblance he draws, may not prejudice the world againſt an original, which contains what is beautiful in ſimplicity, and grand in the ſublime.

A

DISSERTATION

CONCERNING THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN.

THE hiſtory of thoſe nations which originally poſſeſſed the north of Europe, is little known. Deſtitute of the uſe of letters, they themſelves had not the means of tranſmitting their great actions to remote poſterity. Foreign writers ſaw them only at a diſtance, and therefore their accounts are partial and indiſtinct. The vanity of the Romans induced them to conſider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and, conſequently, their hiſtory unworthy of being inveſtigated. Some men, otherwiſe of great merit among ourſelves, give into this confined opinion. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they ſcarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any other ancient people.

Without derogating from the fame of Greece and Rome, we may conſider antiquity beyond the pale of their empire worthy of ſome attention. The nobler paſſions of the mind never ſhoot forth more free and unreſtrained than in theſe times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of life, and thoſe manly purſuits from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a ſtrength of mind unknown in poliſhed times. In advanced ſociety the characters of men are more uniform and diſguiſed. The human paſſions lie, in ſome degree, concealed behind forms and artificial manners; and the powers of the ſoul, without an opportunity of exerting them, loſe their vigour. The times of regular government, and poliſhed manners, are

therefore to be wiſhed for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unſettled ſtate, and thoſe convulſions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted character, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there riſes always ſuperior; no fortuitous event can raiſe the timid and mean into power. To thoſe who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable proſpect: and they alone can have real pleaſure in tracing nations to their ſource.

The eſtabliſhment of the Celtic ſtates, in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of their written annals. The traditions and ſongs to which they truſted their hiſtory, were loſt, or altogether corrupted in their revolutions and migrations, which were ſo frequent and univerſal, that no kingdom in Europe is now poſſeſſed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who, in proceſs of time, loſt all knowledge of their own origin.

If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time free of intermixture with foreigners. We are to look for theſe among the mountains and inacceſſible parts of a country: places, on account of their barrenneſs, uninviting to an enemy, or whoſe natural ſtrength enabled the natives to repel invaſions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially from thoſe who poſſeſs the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are thoſe of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conſcious of their own antiquity, they long deſpiſed others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for paſture, they were free of that toil and buſineſs, which engroſs the attention of a commercial people. Their amuſement conſiſted in hearing or repeating their ſongs and traditions, and theſe entirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among

any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods, are only to be regarded, in ſo far as they coincide with cotemporary writers of undoubted credit and veracity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period, than the hiſtorians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itſelf, they give a long liſt of ancient kings, and a detail of their tranſactions, with a ſcrupulous exactneſs. One might naturally ſuppoſe, that, when they had no authentic annals, they ſhould, at leaſt, have recourſe to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular ſyſtem of hiſtory. Of both they ſeem to have been equally deſtitute. Born in the low country, and ſtrangers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themſelves with copying from one another, and retailing the ſame fictions, in a new colour and dreſs.

John Fordun was the firſt who collected thoſe fragments of the Scots hiſtory, which had eſcaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in ſo far as they concerned recent tranſactions, deſerved credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unſatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the Pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote æra. Fordun poſſeſſed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country ſhould yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Deſtitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourſe to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the firſt habitation of the Scots. He found, there, that the Iriſh bárds had carried their pretenſions to antiquity as high, if not beyond any nation in Europe. It was from them he took thoſe improbable fictions, which form the firſt part of his hiſtory.

The writers that ſucceeded Fordun implicitly followed his ſyſtem, though they ſometimes varied from him in their relations of particular tranſactions, and

the order of ſucceſſion of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were, equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their hiſtories contain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himſelf, except the elegance and vigour of his ſtyle, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he ſeemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predeceſſors to his own purpoſes, than to detect their miſrepreſentations, or inveſtigate truth amidſt the darkneſs which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own hiſtorians, concerning the firſt migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this iſland was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came afterwards from the north of Europe is a matter of mere ſpeculation. When South Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Caledonians*. From their very name, it appears, that they were of thoſe *Gauls*, who poſſeſſed themſelves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two *Celtic* words, *Caël* ſignifying *Celts*, or *Gauls*, and *Dun*, or *Don*, *a hill;* ſo that *Caël-don* or Çaledonians, is as much as to ſay, the *Celts of the hill country*. The Highlanders to this day, call themſelves *Caël*, their language *Caëlic* or *Galic*, and their country *Caëldoch*, which the Romans ſoftened into *Caledonia*. This, of itſelf, is ſufficient to demonſtrate, that they are the genuine deſcendents of the ancient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of *Scots*, who ſettled firſt in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From the double meaning of the word *Caël*, which ſignifies *ſtrangers*, as well as *Gauls*, or *Celts*, ſome have imagined, that the anceſtors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the reſt of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, ſay they, is ſupported by Tacitus, who, from ſeveral circumſtances, concludes that the Caledonians

were of German extraction. A diſcuſſion of a point ſo intricate, at this diſtance of time, could neither be ſatisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century, we meet with the *Scots* in the north. Porphyrius † makes the firſt mention of them about that time. As the *Scots* were not heard of before that period, moſt writers ſuppoſed them to have been a colony, newly come to Britain, and that the *Picts* were the only genuine deſcendents of the ancient Caledonians. This miſtake is eaſily removed. The Caledonians, in proceſs of time, became naturally divided into two diſtinct nations, as poſſeſſing parts of the country, entirely different in their nature and ſoil. The weſtern coaſt of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the eaſt the country is plain, and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontrouled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as ſuited beſt with their convenience or inclination. They were not, therefore, improperly called, by their neighbours, SCUITE or the *wandering nation;* which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of *Scoti*.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who poſſeſſed the eaſt coaſt of Scotland, as the diviſion of the country was plain and fertile, applied themſelves to agriculture, and raiſing of corn. It was from this, that the Galic name of the *Picts* proceeded; for they are called, in that language, *Cruithnich*, i. e. *the wheat* or *corn-eaters*. As the Picts lived in a country ſo different in its nature from that poſſeſſed by the Scots, ſo their national character ſuffered a material change. Unobſtructed by mountains, or lakes, their communication with one another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became ſooner eſtabliſhed among them, than among the Scots, and, conſequently, they were much ſooner governed by civil magiſtrates and laws. This, at laſt,

† St. Hierom, ad Cteſiphon.

produced ſo great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almoſt continual quarrels and animoſities ſubſiſted between them. Theſe animoſities, after ſome ages, ended in the ſubverſion of the Pictiſh kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation, according to moſt of the Scots writers, who ſeemed to think it more for the honour of their countrymen to annihilate than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of the Picts was loſt, and thoſe that remained were ſo completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they ſoon loſt all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictiſh government is placed ſo near that period, to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or hiſtory remaining. This favours the ſyſtem I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of courſe would be different. The contrary is the caſe. The names of places in the Pictiſh dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to us, are of Galic original, which is a convincing proof that the two nations were, of old, one and the ſame, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their ſituation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of *Picts* was, perhaps, given by the Romans to the Caledonians who poſſeſſed the eaſt coaſt of Scotland, from their painting their bodies This circumſtance made ſome imagine, that the Picts were of Britiſh extract, and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons, who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, ſettled in the low country of Scotland, than among the Scots of the mountains, may be eaſily imagined, from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts. From this circumſtance proceeded the name of the latter, to diſtinguiſh them

ſrom the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who diſcontinued it after the Roman conqueſt.

The Caledonians, moſt certainly, acquired a conſiderable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coaſt interſected with many arms of the ſea, and, in iſlands divided, one from another, by wide and dangerous friths. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they, very early, found their way to the north of Ireland, which is within ſight of their own country. That Ireland was firſt peopled from Britain is certain. The vicinity of the two iſlands; the exact correſpondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are ſufficient proofs, even if we had not the teſtimony of authors of undoubted veracity † to confirm it. The abettors of the moſt romantic ſyſtems of Iriſh antiquities allow it; but they place the colony from Britain at an improbable and remote æra. I ſhall eaſily admit, that the colony of the *Firbolg*, confeſſedly the *Belgæ* of Britain, ſettled in the ſouth of Ireland, before the *Caël*, or Caledonians, diſcovered the north: but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the Firbolg to Ireland happened many centuries before the Chriſtian æra.

Oſſian, in the poem of Temora, [Book II.] throws conſiderable light on this ſubject. His accounts agree ſo well with what the ancients have delivered, concerning the firſt population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiaſſed perſon will confeſs them more probable, than the legends handed down, by tradition, in that country. From him, it appears, that in the days of Trathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was poſſeſſed by two nations; the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ* of Britain, who inhabited the ſouth, and the *Caël*, who paſſed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulſter. The two nations, as is uſual among an unpoliſhed and lately ſettled people, were divided into ſmall dynaſties, ſubject to petty kings, or chiefs, independent of one another. In this ſitua-

† Dio. Sic. l. 5.

tion, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the ſtate of the iſland, until Crothar, lord of Atha, a country in Connaught, the moſt potent chief of the *Firbolg* carried away Conlama, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the *Cael*, who poſſeſſed Ulſter.

Conlama had been betrothed, ſome time before, to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch reſented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an irruption into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppoſe his progreſs. Crothar himſelf then took arms, and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war, upon this, became general between the two nations: and the Cael were reduced to the laſt extremity. In this ſituation, they applied, for aid, to Trathal king of Morven, who ſent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar, upon his arrival in Ulſter, was choſen king, by the unanimous conſent of the Caledonian tribes, who poſſeſſed that country. The war was renewed with vigour and ſucceſs; but the *Firbolg* appear to have been rather repelled than ſubdued. In ſucceeding reigns, we learn from epiſodes in the ſame poem, that the chiefs of Atha made ſeveral efforts to become monarchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar.

To Conar ſucceeded his ſon Cormac, [Book III.] who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he ſeems to have been driven to the laſt extremity, by an inſurrection of the *Firbolg*, who ſupported the pretenſions of the chiefs of Atha to the Iriſh throne. Fingal, who then was very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colc-ulla, chief of Atha, and re-eſtabliſhed Cormac in the ſole poſſeſſion of all Ireland. [Book IV.] It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Oſſian.

Cormac was ſucceeded in the Iriſh throne by his ſon Cairbar; Cairbar by Artho, his ſon, who was the father of that Cormac, in whoſe minority the invaſion

of Swaran happened, which is the ſubject of the poem of *Fingal*. The family of Atha, who had not relinquiſhed their pretenſions to the Iriſh throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. [Book I.] Cairbar, lord of Atha, upon this, mounted the throne. His uſurpation ſoon ended with his life; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and reſtored, after various viciſſitudes of fortune, the family of Conar to the poſſeſſion of the kingdom. This war is the ſubject of Temora; the events, though certainly heightened, and embelliſhed by poetry, ſeem, notwithſtanding, to have their foundation in true hiſtory.

Oſſian has not only preſerved the hiſtory of the firſt migration of the Caledonians into Ireland, but has alſo delivered ſome important facts concerning the firſt ſettlement of the *Firbolg*, or *Belgæ of Britain*, in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was anceſtor to Cairbar and Cathmor, who ſucceſſively mounted the Iriſh throne, after the death of Cormac, the ſon of Artho. I forbear to tranſcribe the paſſage, on account of its length. [Book VII.] It is the ſong of Fonar, the bard, towards the latter end of the ſeventh book of Temora. As the generations from Larthon to Cathmor, to whom the epiſode is addreſſed, are not marked, as are thoſe of the family of Conar, the firſt king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the ſettlement of the Firbolg. It is, however, probable, it was ſome time before the Caël, or Caledonians, ſettled in Ulſter. One important fact may be gathered from this hiſtory of Oſſian, that the Iriſh had no king before the latter end of the firſt century. Fingal lived, it is certain, in the third century; ſo Conar, the firſt monarch of the Iriſh, who was his grand uncle, cannot be placed farther back than the cloſe of the firſt. The eſtabliſhing of this fact, lays, at once, aſide the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Iriſh, and cuts off the long liſt of kings which the latter give us for a millennium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can

be depended upon prior to the reign of Fergus, the ſon of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The true hiſtory of Ireland begins ſomewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware†, who was indefatigable in his reſearches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction and idle romance, all that is related of the ancient Iriſh, before the time of St. Patrick, and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this conſideration, that he begins his hiſtory at the introduction of Chriſtianity, remarking, that all that is delivered down, concerning the times of Paganiſm, were tales of late invention, ſtrangely mixed with anachroniſms and inconſiſtencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected with uncommon induſtry and zeal, all the real and pretendedly ancient manuſcripts, concerning the hiſtory of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and ſelf-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and puerile to the laſt degree, they have diſgraced the antiquities they meant to eſtabliſh. It is to be wiſhed, that ſome able Iriſhman, who underſtands the language and records of his country, may redeem, ere it is too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of theſe idle fabuliſts.

By comparing the hiſtory preſerved by Oſſian with the legends of the Scots and Iriſh writers, and by afterwards examining both by the teſt of the Roman authors, it is eaſy to diſcover which is the moſt probable. Probability is all that can be eſtabliſhed on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypotheſis laid down by cotemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finiſhes the figure of which they only drew the outlines, it ought in the judgment of ſober reaſon, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and diſtant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century, which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus, the ſon of Erc or Arcath, tradition is dark and contradic-

† War. de Antiq. Hybern. præ. p. 1.

tory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a ſon of Fingal of that name, who makes a conſiderable figure in Oſſian's poems. The three elder ſons of Fingal, Oſſian, Fillan and Ryno, dying without iſſue, the ſucceſſion, of courſe, devolved upon Fergus, the fourth ſon and his poſterity. This Fergus, ſay ſome traditions, was the father of Congal, whoſe ſon was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the firſt king of Scots, as it was in his time the Cael, who poſſeſſed the weſtern coaſt of Scotland, began to be diſtinguiſhed by foreigners, by the name of Scots. From thence forward, the Scots and Picts, as diſtinct nations, became objects of attention, to the hiſtorians of other countries. The internal ſtate of the two Caledonian kingdoms has always continued, and ever muſt remain, in obſcurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we muſt fix the beginning of the decay of that ſpecies of heroiſm, which ſubſiſted in the days of Oſſian. There are three ſtages in human ſociety. The firſt is the reſult of conſanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The ſecond begins when property is eſtabliſhed, and men enter into aſſociations for mutual defence, againſt the invaſions and injuſtice of neighbours. Mankind ſubmit, in the third, to certain laws and ſubordinations of government, to which they truſt the ſafety of their perſons and property. As the firſt is formed on nature, ſo, of courſe, it is the moſt diſintereſted and noble. Men, in the laſt, have leiſure to cultivate the mind, and to reſtore it, with reflection, to a primæval dignity of ſentiment. The middle ſtate is the region of complete barbariſm and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the ſecond ſtage, and conſequently into thoſe circumſcribed ſentiments, which always diſtinguiſh barbarity. The events which ſoon after happened did not at all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of do-

meſtic commotions, entirely forſook Britain, finding it impoſſible to defend ſo diſtant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, ſeizing this favourable opportunity, made incurſions into the deſerted province. The Britons, enervated by the ſlavery of ſeveral centuries, and thoſe vices, which are inſeparable from an advanced ſtate of civility, were not able to withſtand the impetuous, though irregular attacks of a barbarous enemy. In the utmoſt diſtreſs, they applied to their old maſters, the Romans, and (after the unfortunate ſtate of the empire could not ſpare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave, with the enemies of whom they were ſo much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found means to extend themſelves, conſiderably towards the ſouth. It is, in this period, we muſt place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The ſeat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the ſouth, to be near the common enemy, in caſe of ſudden incurſions.

Inſtead of roving through unfrequented wilds, in ſearch of ſubſiſtence, by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture, and raiſing of corn. This manner of life was the firſt means of changing the national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with ſtrangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable the moſt of the old inhabitants remained. Theſe incorporating with the conquerors, taught them agriculture, and other arts, which they themſelves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the moſt predominant, retained ſtill their language, and as many of the cuſtoms of their anceſtors, as ſuited with the nature of the country they poſſeſſed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally deſcended from the ſame ſtock, the manners of the Picts and Scots

were as ſimilar as the different natures of the countries they poſſeſſed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation, was their wars, and other tranſactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the ſouth of Scotland were alternately poſſeſſed by the two nations. They were ceded, in the ninth age, to the Scots, and, it is probable, that moſt of the Saxon inhabitants remained in poſſeſſion of their lands. During the ſeveral conqueſts and revolutions in England, many fled, for refuge, into Scotland, to avoid the oppreſſion of foreigners, or the tyranny of domeſtic uſurpers; in ſo much, that the Saxon race formed perhaps near one half of the Scottiſh kingdom. The Saxon manners and language daily gained ground, on the tongue and cuſtoms of the ancient Caledonians, till, at laſt, the latter were entirely relegated to inhabitants of the mountains, who were ſtill unmixed with ſtrangers.

It was after the acceſſion of territory which the Scots received, upon the retreat of the Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was conſidered by the whole nation, as the chief of their blood. Their ſmall number, as well as the preſence of their prince, prevented thoſe diviſions, which, afterwards ſprung forth into ſo many ſeparate tribes. When the ſeat of government was removed to the ſouth, thoſe who remained in the Highlands were, of courſe, neglected. They naturally formed themſelves into ſmall ſocieties, independent of one another. Each ſociety, had its own *regulus*, who either was, or in the ſucceſſion of a few generations, was regarded as chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an inſtitution of this ſort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extenſive heaths and impaſſible mountains, form the face of the Highlands. In theſe valleys the chiefs fixed their reſidence. Round them, and almoſt within ſight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The ſeats of the Highland chiefs were neither diſagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods, they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which, diſcharging itſelf not far off, into an arm of the ſea, or extenſive lake, ſwarmed with variety of fiſh. The woods were ſtocked with wild-fowl; and the heaths and mountains behind them were the natural ſeat of the red-deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward ſtate of agriculture, the valleys were not unfertile; affording, if not all the conveniencies, at leaſt the neceſſaries of life. Here the chief lived, the ſupreme judge and law-giver of his own people; but his ſway was neither ſevere nor unjuſt. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood, ſo he, in return, conſidered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though abſolute and deciſive, partook more of the authority of a father, than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was conſidered as the property of the chief, yet his vaſſals made him no other conſideration for their lands than ſervices, neither burdenſome nor frequent. As he ſeldom went from home, he was at no expence. His table was ſupplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence the Highland chiefs lived, for many ages. At a diſtance from the ſeat of government, and ſecured, by the inacceſſibleneſs of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with ſtrangers, the cuſtoms of their anceſtors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their anceſtors, they delighted in traditions and ſongs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and eſpecially of their own particular families. A ſucceſſion of bards was retained in every clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As the æra of Fingal, on account of Oſſian's poems, was the moſt

remarkable, and his chiefs the moſt renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place one of them in the genealogy of every great family. That part of the poems, which concerned the hero who was regarded as anceſtor, was preſerved, as an authentic record of the antiquity of the family, and was delivered down, from race to race, with wonderful exactneſs.

The bards themſelves, in the mean time, were not idle. They erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their ſongs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expreſſions, and the manners they repreſent, may pleaſe thoſe who underſtand the language; their obſcurity and inaccuracy would diſguſt in a tranſlation. It was chiefly for this reaſon, that I kept wholly to the compoſitions of Oſſian, in my former and preſent publication. As he acted in a more extenſive ſphere, his ideas are more noble and univerſal; neither has he ſo many of thoſe peculiarities, which are only underſtood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in that ſpecies of compoſition in which Oſſian excels. Their rhymes, only calculated to kindle a martial ſpirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleaſure to genuine taſte. This obſervation only regards their poems of the heroic kind; in every other ſpecies of poetry they are more ſucceſsful. They expreſs the tender melancholy of deſponding love, with irreſiſtible ſimplicity and nature. So well adapted are the ſounds of the words to the ſentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and diſſolve the heart. Succeſsful love is expreſſed with peculiar tenderneſs and elegance. In all their compoſitions, except the heroic, which was ſolely calculated to animate the vulgar, they give us the genuine language of the heart, without any of thoſe affected ornaments of phraſeology, which, though intended to beautify ſentiments, diveſt them of their natural force. The ideas, it is con-

feſſed, are too local, to be admired, in another language; to thoſe who are acquainted with the manners they repreſent, and the ſcenes they deſcribe, they muſt afford the higheſt pleaſure and ſatisfaction.

It was the locality of his deſcription and ſentiment, that, probably, kept Oſſian ſo long in the obſcurity of an almoſt loſt language. His ideas, though remarkably proper for the times in which he lived, are ſo contrary to the preſent advanced ſtate of ſociety, that more than a common mediocrity of taſte is required, to reliſh his poems as they deſerve. Thoſe who alone were capable to make a tranſlation were, no doubt, conſcious of this, and choſe rather to admire their poet in ſecret, than ſee him received, with coldneſs, in an Engliſh dreſs.

Theſe were long my own ſentiments, and accordingly my firſt tranſlations, from the Galic, were merely accidental. The publication, which ſoon after followed, was ſo well received, that I was obliged to promiſe to my friends a larger collection. In a journey through the Highlands and iſles, and, by the aſſiſtance of correſpondents, ſince I left that country, all the genuine remains of the works of Oſſian have come to my hands. In the preceding volume† complete poems were only given. Unfiniſhed and imperfect poems were purpoſely omitted; even ſome pieces were rejected on account of their length, and others, that they might not break in upon that thread of connection, which ſubſiſts in the leſſer compoſitions, ſubjoined to *Fingal*. That the comparative merit of pieces was not regarded, in the ſelection, will readily appear to thoſe who ſhall read, attentively, the preſent collection. It is animated with the ſame ſpirit of poetry, and the ſame ſtrength of ſentiment is ſuſtained throughout.

The opening of the poem of Temora made its appearance in the firſt collection of Oſſian's works. The ſecond book, and ſeveral other epiſodes, have only fallen

† The Author alludes to the poems preceding Berrathon, as that poem, formerly ended the firſt volume.

into my hands lately. The ſtory of the poem, with which I had been long acquainted, enabled me to reduce the broken members of the piece into the order in which they now appear. For the eaſe of the reader, I have divided myſelf into books, as I had done before with the poem of *Fingal*. As to the merit of the poem I ſhall not anticipate the judgment of the public. My impartiality might be ſuſpected, in my accounts of a work, which, in ſome meaſure, is become my own. If the poem of Fingal met with the applauſe of perſons of genuine taſte, I ſhould alſo hope, that Temora will not diſpleaſe them.

But what renders Temora infinitely more valuable than Fingal, is the light it throws on the hiſtory of the times. The firſt population of Ireland, its firſt kings, and ſeveral circumſtances, which regard its connection of old with the ſouth and north of Britain, are preſented to us, in ſeveral epiſodes. The ſubject and cataſtrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the firſt peopling of that country, and the conteſts between the two Britiſh nations, which originally inhabited it. In a preceding part of this Diſſertation, I have ſhewn how ſuperior the probability of Oſſian's traditions is to the undigeſted fictions of the Iriſh bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Iriſh and Scottiſh hiſtorians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquities of the two nations, though I have all along expreſſed my doubts, concerning the veracity and abilities of thoſe who deliver down their ancient hiſtory. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, ariſing from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages of remote and obſcure antiquity. No kingdom now eſtabliſhed in Europe, can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, even according to my ſyſtem, ſo that it is altogether needleſs to fix their origin a fictitious millennium before.

Since the publication of the poems contained in the firſt volume, many inſinuations have been made,

and doubts ariſen, concerning their authenticity. I ſhall, probably, hear more of the ſame kind after the preſent poems ſhall make their appearance. Whether theſe ſuſpicions are ſuggeſted by prejudice, or are only the effects of ignorance of facts, I ſhall not pretend to determine. To me they give no concern, as I have it always in my power to remove them. An incredulity of this kind is natural to perſons, who confine all merit to their own age and country. Theſe are generally the weakeſt, as well as the moſt ignorant, of the people. Indolently confined to a place, their ideas are narrow and circumſcribed. It is ridiculous enough to ſee ſuch people as theſe are, branding their anceſtors, with the deſpicable appellation of barbarians. Sober reaſon can eaſily diſcern, where the title ought to be fixed with more propriety.

As prejudice is always the effect of ignorance, the knowing, the men of true taſte, deſpiſe and diſmiſs it. If the poetry is good, and the characters natural and ſtriking, to them it is a matter of indifference, whether the heroes were born in the little village of Angles in Jutland, or natives of the barren heaths of Caledonia. That honour which nations derive from anceſtors, worthy, or renowned, is merely ideal. It may buoy up the minds of individuals, but it contributes very little to their importance in the eyes of others. But of all thoſe prejudices which are incident to narrow minds, that which meaſures the merit of performances by the vulgar opinion, concerning the country which produced them, is certainly the moſt ridiculous. Ridiculous, however, as it is, few have the courage to reject it; and I am thoroughly convinced, that a few quaint lines of a Roman or Greek epigrammatiſt, if dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum, would meet with more cordial and univerſal applauſe, than all the moſt beautiful and natural rhapſodies of all the Celtic bards and Scandinavian ſcalders that ever exiſted.

While ſome doubt the authenticity of the compoſitions of Oſſian, others ſtrenuouſly endeavour to appro-

priate them to the Iriſh nation. Though the whole tenor of the poems ſufficiently contradict ſo abſurd an opinion, it may not be improper, for the ſatisfaction of ſome, to examine the narrow foundation, on which this extraordinary claim is built.

Of all the nations deſcended from the ancient *Celtæ*, the Scots and Iriſh are the moſt ſimilar in language, cuſtoms, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote deſcent from the great Celtic ſtock. It is evident, in ſhort, that at ſome one period or other, they formed one ſociety, were ſubject to the ſame government, and were, in all reſpects, one and the ſame people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother-nation, does not fall now to be diſcuſſed. The firſt circumſtance that induced me to diſregard the vulgarly-received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottiſh nation, was my obſervations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue, ſpoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure, more agreeable to its mother-language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now ſpoken, or even that which has been writ for ſome centuries back, amongſt the moſt unmixed part of the Iriſh nation. A Scotſman, tolerably converſant in his own language, underſtands an Iriſh compoſition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the *Galic* of North Britain. An Iriſhman on the other hand, without the aid of ſtudy, can never underſtand a compoſition in the *Galic* tongue. This affords a proof that the *Scots Galic* is the moſt original, and, conſequently the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Iriſh, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, ſeem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they give to the dialect they ſpeak. They call their own language *Caelic Eirinach*, i. e. *Caledonian Iriſh*, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North Britain *a Chaelic* or the *Caledonian tongue*, emphatically. A circumſtance of this nature tends more to

decide which is the moſt ancient nation, than the united teſtimonies of a whole legion of ignorant bards and ſenachies, who, perhaps never dreamed of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till ſome one of them, more learned than the reſt, diſcovered, that the Romans called the firſt *Iberia*, and the latter *Hibernia*. On ſuch a ſlight foundation were probably built thoſe romantic fictions, concerning the Mileſians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it ſufficiently appears, that the poems publiſhed under the name of Oſſian, are not of Iriſh compoſition. The favourite chimera, that Ireland is the mother-country of the Scots, is totally ſubverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of ſucceſſive *ſenachies* and *fileas*, are found, at laſt, to be the ſpurious brood of modern and ignorant ages. To thoſe who know how tenacious the Iriſh are, of their pretended *Iberian* deſcent, this alone is proof ſufficient, that poems, ſo ſubverſive of their ſyſtem, could never be produced by an Hibernian bard. But when we look to the language, it is ſo different from the Iriſh dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's Paradiſe Loſt could be wrote by a Scottiſh peaſant, as to ſuppoſe, that the poems aſcribed to Oſſian were writ in Ireland.

The pretenſions of Ireland to Oſſian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down, in that country, traditional poems, concerning the *Fiona*, or the heroes of *Fion Mac Comnal*. This *Fion*, ſay the Iriſh annaliſts, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned that Ireland had an *embodied* militia ſo early, is not eaſy for me to determine. Their information certainly did not come from the Iriſh poems, concerning *Fion*. I have juſt now, in my hands, all that remain, of thoſe compoſitions; but, unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every ſtanza, nay

almoſt every line, affords ſtriking proofs, that they cannot be three centuries old. Their alluſions to the manners and cuſtoms of the fifteenth century, are ſo many, that it is matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taſte, which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, inchanted caſtles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches and magicians form the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated *Fion* could ſcarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches, on broomſticks, were continually hovering round him, like crows; and he had freed inchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland. In ſhort, *Fion*, great as he was, paſſed a diſagreeable life. Not only had he to engage all the miſchiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, aſſiſted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings as tall as the main maſt of a firſt rate. It muſt be owned, however, that *Fion* was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air Cromleach, druim-ard,
Chos eile air Crom-meal dubh,
Thoga Fion le lamh mhoir
An d'uiſgeo Lubhair na fruth.

With one foot on Cromleach his brow,
The other on Crommal the dark,
Fion took up with his large hand
The water from Lubar of the ſtreams.

Cromleach and *Crommal* were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulſter, and the river *Lubar* ran through the intermediate valley. The property of ſuch a monſter as this *Fion*, I ſhould never have diſputed with any nation. But the bard himſelf in the poem, from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

Fion o Albin, fiol nan laoich.
Fion from Albion, race of heroes!

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this diſtance of time, I ſhould have given as my opinion, that this enormous *Fion* was of the race of the Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or ſome other celebrated

name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whoſe inhabitants, now at leaſt, are not remarkable for their ſtature.

If *Fion* was ſo remarkable for his ſtature, his heroes had alſo other extraordinary properties. *In weight all the ſons of ſtrangers* yielded to the celebrated Ton-ioſal; and for hardneſs of ſkull, and, perhaps, for thickneſs too, the valiant Oſcar ſtood *unrivalled and alone*. Oſſian himſelf had many ſingular and leſs delicate qualifications, than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuchullin was of ſo diminutive a ſize, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illuſtrate this ſubject, I ſhall here lay before the reader the hiſtory of ſome of the Iriſh poems, concerning *Fion Mac-Comnal*. A tranſlation of theſe pieces, if well executed, might afford ſatisfaction to the public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth, from obſcurity, the poems of my own country, has afforded ample employment to me; beſides, I am too diffident of my own abilities, to undertake ſuch a work. A gentleman in Dublin accuſed me to the public of committing blunders and abſurdities, in tranſlating the language of my own country, and that before any tranſlation of mine appeared†. How the gentleman came to ſee my blunders before I committed them is not eaſy to determine; if it did not conclude, that, as a Scotſman, and, of courſe deſcended of the Mileſian race, I might have committed ſome of thoſe o-

† In Faulkner's Dublin Journal, of the 1ſt December, 1761, appeared, the following Advertiſement:

"Speedily will be publiſhed, by a gentleman of this kingdom, who hath been for ſome time paſt, employed in tranſlating and writing Hiſtorical Notes to

FINGAL:

A POEM,

Originally wrote in the Iriſh or Erſe language. In the preface to which, the tranſlator, who is a perfect maſter of the Iriſh tongue, will give an account of the manners and cuſtoms of the ancient Iriſh or Scots: and therefore, moſt humbly entreats the public, to wait for his edition, which will appear in a ſhort time, as he will ſet forth all the blunders and abſurdities in the edition now printing in London, and ſhew the ignorance of the Engliſh tranſlator, in his knowledge of Iriſh grammar, not underſtanding any part of that accidence."

verſights, which, perhaps very unjuſtly, are ſaid to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Iriſh poems, concerning the *Fiona*, it appears, that *Fion Mac-Comnal* flouriſhed in the reign of Cormac, which is placed by the univerſal conſent of the ſenachies, in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his ſon Oſſian is made contemporary with St. Patrick, who preached the goſpel in Ireland about the middle of the fifth age. Oſſian, though, at that time, he muſt have been two hundred and fifty years of age, had a daughter young enough to become wife to the ſaint. On account of this family connection, *Patrick of the Pſalms*, for ſo the apoſtle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Oſſian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The ſaint ſometimes threw off the auſterity of his profeſſion, drunk freely, and had his ſoul properly warmed with wine, in order to hear, with becoming enthuſiaſm, the poems of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of uſeful information.

Lo don rabh Padric na mhur,
Gun Sailm air uidh, ach a gol,
Ghluais e thigh Oſſian mhic Fhion,
O ſan leis bhinn a ghloir.

The title of this poem is *Teantach mor na Fiona*. It appears to have been founded on the ſame ſtory with the *Battle of Lora*, one of the poems of the genuine Oſſian. The circumſtances and cataſtrophe in both are much the ſame; but the *Iriſh Oſſian* diſcovers the age in which he lived, by an unlucky anachroniſm. After deſcribing the total route of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, "that none of the foe eſcaped, but a few who were allowed to go on a pilgrimage to the *Holy Land*." This circumſtance fixes the date of the compoſition of the piece ſome centuries after the famous croiſade; for, it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croiſade ſo ancient, that

he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the courſe of this poem, is often called,

Roigh Lochlin an du ſhloigh,
King of Denmark of two nations,

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark, a circumſtance which brings down the date of the piece to an æra, not far remote. Modern, however, as this pretended Oſſian was, it is certain, he lived before the Iriſh had dreamed of appropriating *Fion* or *Fingal*, to themſelves. He concludes the poem, with this reflection.

Na fagha ſe comhthrom nan n' arm,
Erragon Mac Annir nan lann glas
'San n'Albin ni n'abairtair Triath
Agus ghlaoite an n'Fhiona as.

"Had Erragon, ſon of Annir of gleaming ſwords, avoided the equal conteſt of arms, (ſingle combat) no chief ſhould have afterwards been numbered in Albion, and the heroes of Fion ſhould no more be named."

The next poem that falls under our obſervation is *Cath-cabhra*, or *The Death of Oſcar*. This piece is founded on the ſame ſtory which we have in the firſt book of Temora. So little thought the author of *Cath cabhra* of making Oſcar his countryman, that in the courſe of two hundred lines, of which the poem conſiſts, he puts the following expreſſion thrice in the mouth of the hero:

Albion an ſa d' roina m' arach. --
Albion where I was born and bred.

The poem contains almoſt all the incidents in the firſt book of Temora. In one circumſtance the bard differs materially from Oſſian. Oſcar, after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hill, which commanded a proſpect of the ſea. A fleet appeared at a diſtance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

Loingeas mo ſhean-athair at'an
'S iad a tiachd le cabhair chugain,
O Albin na n'ioma ſtuagh.

"It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to

our field, from Albion of many waves!" The teſtimony of this bard is ſufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O'Flaherty; for though he is far from being ancient, it is probable, he flouriſhed a full century before theſe hiſtorians. He appears, however, to have been a much better Chriſtian than chronologer; for *Fion*, though he is placed two centuries before St. Patrick, very devoutly recommends the ſoul of his grandſon to his Redeemer.

Duan a Gharibh Mac-Starn is another Iriſh poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of ſentiment, might have induced me to give a tranſlation of it, had not I ſome expectations of ſeeing it in the collection of the Iriſh Oſſian's poems, promiſed more than a year ſince, to the public. The author deſcends ſometimes from the region of the ſublime to low and indecent deſcription; the laſt of which the Iriſh tranſlator, no doubt, will chuſe to leave in the obſcurity of the original. In this piece Cuchullin is uſed with very little ceremony, for he is oft called the *Dog of Tara*, in the county of Meath. This ſevere title of the *redoubtable Cuchullin*, the moſt renowned of Iriſh champions, proceeded from the poet's ignorance of etymology. Cu, *voice*, or commander, ſignifies alſo a *dog*. The poet choſe the laſt, as the moſt noble appellation for his hero.

The ſubject of the poem is the ſame with that of the epic poem of Fingal. *Garibh Mac-Starn* is the ſame with Oſſian's Swaran, the ſon of Starno. His ſingle combats with, and his victory over all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the *celebrated dog of Tara*, i. e. Cuchullin, afford matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. *Garibh's* progreſs in ſearch of Cuchullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero's wife, enables the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuchullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal he calls *the guiding ſtar of the women of Ireland*. The property of this enormous lady I ſhall not diſpute with him, or any other. But as he

ſpeaks with great tenderneſs of the *daughters of the convent*, and throws out ſome hints againſt the Engliſh nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuchullin.

Another Iriſh Oſſian, for there were many, as appears from their difference in language and ſentiment, ſpeaks very dogmatically of *Fion Mac-Comnal*, as an Iriſhman. Little can be ſaid for the judgment of this poet, and leſs for his delicacy of ſentiment. The hiſtory of one of his epiſodes may, at once, ſtand as a ſpecimen of his want of both. Ireland, in the days of *Fion*, happened to be threatened with an invaſion, by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needleſs to inſiſt upon the impropriety of a French invaſion of Ireland; it is ſufficient for me to be faithful to the language of my author. *Fion*, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invaſion, ſent Ca-olt, Oſſian, and Oſcar, to watch the bay, in which, it was apprehended the enemy was to land. Oſcar was the worſt choice of a ſcout that could be made, for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often aſleep on his poſt, nor was it poſſible to awake him, without cutting off one of his fingers, or daſhing a large ſtone againſt his head. When the enemy appeared, Oſcar, very unfortunately, was aſleep. Oſſian and Ca-olt conſulted about the method of wakening him, and they, at laſt, fixed on the ſtone, as the leſs dangerous expedient.

Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gan,
Agus a n' aighai' chiean gun bhuail;
Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

"Ca-olt took up a heavy ſtone, and ſtruck it againſt the hero's head. The hill ſhook for three miles, as the ſtone rebounded and rolled away." Oſcar roſe in wrath, and his father gravely deſired him to ſpend his rage on his enemies, which he did to ſo good purpoſe, that he ſingly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced, notwithſtanding, till they

came to a narrow paſs, poſſeſſed by the celebrated Ton-ioſal. This name is very ſignificant of the ſingular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-ioſal, though brave, was ſo heavy and unwieldy, that, when he ſat down, it took the whole force of an hundred men to ſet him upright on his feet again. Luckily for the preſervation of Ireland, the hero happened to be ſtanding when the enemy appeared, and he gave ſo good an account of them, that *Fion*, upon his arrival, found little to do, but to divide the ſpoil among his ſoldiers.

All theſe extraordinary heroes, Fion, Oſſian, Oſcar, and Ca-olt, ſays the poet, were

Siol Erin na gorm lann.
The ſons of Erin of blue ſteel.

Neither ſhall I much diſpute the matter with him: He has my conſent alſo to appropriate to Ireland the celebrated Ton-ioſal. I ſhall only ſay, that they are different perſons from thoſe of the ſame name, in the Scots poems; and that though the ſtupendous valour of the firſt is ſo remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is ſomewhat extraordinary, that *Fion*, who lived ſome ages before St. Patrick, ſwears like a very good Chriſtian.

Air an Dia do chum gach caſe.
By God, who ſhaped every caſe.

It is worthy of being remarked, that, in the line quoted, Oſſian, who lived in St. Patrick's days, ſeems to have underſtood ſomething of the Engliſh, a language not then ſubſiſting. A perſon, more ſanguine for the honour of his country than I am, might argue, from this circumſtance, that this pretendedly Iriſh Oſſian was a native of Scotland; for my countrymen are univerſally allowed to have an excluſive right to the ſecond-ſight.

From the inſtances given, the reader may form a complete idea of the Iriſh compoſitions concerning the *Fiona*. The greateſt part of them make the heroes of *Fion*,

Siol Albin a n'nioma caoile.
The race of Albion of many ſriths.

The reſt make them natives of Ireland. But, the truth

is, that their authority is of little conſequence on either ſide. From the inſtances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their alluſions to the manners of the times, fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of theſe pieces avoided all alluſions to their own times, it is impoſſible that the poems could paſs for ancient, in the eyes of any perſon tolerably converſant with the Iriſh tongue. The idiom is ſo corrupted, and ſo many words borrowed from the Engliſh, that that language muſt have made conſiderable progreſs in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to ſhew, how the Iriſh bards began to appropriate Oſſian and his heroes to their own country. After the Engliſh conqueſt, many of the natives of Ireland, averſe to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a ſtate of hoſtility with the conquerors, or at leaſt, paid little regard to their government. The Scots, in thoſe ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendſhip with the Engliſh. The ſimilarity of manners and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and above all, their having to do with the ſame enemy, created a free and friendly intercourſe between the Scottiſh and Iriſh nations. As the cuſtom of retaining bards and ſenachies was common to both; ſo each, no doubt, had formed a ſyſtem of hiſtory, it matters not how much ſoever fabulous, concerning their reſpective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together, and, if poſſible, to deduce them from the ſame original ſtock.

The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progreſs in the ſouth of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional hiſtory of the nation, became confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from ſeveral concurring circumſtances, into the laſt degree of ignorance and barbariſm. The Iriſh, who, for ſome ages before the con-

queſt, had poſſeſſed a competent ſhare of that kind of learning, which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impoſe their own fictions on the ignorant Highland ſenachies, by flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long liſt of Heremonian kings and heroes, they, without contradiction, aſſumed to themſelves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was eſtabliſhed that Hibernian ſyſtem of the original of the Scots, which afterwards, for want of any other, was univerſally received. The Scots of the low country, who, by loſing the language of their anceſtors, loſt, together with it, their national traditions, received, implicitly, the hiſtory of their country, from Iriſh refugees, or from Highland ſenachies, perſuaded over into the Hibernian ſyſtem.

Theſe circumſtances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear teſtimony to a fact, of itſelf abundantly probable. What makes the matter inconteſtible is, that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though a few ignorant ſenachies might be perſuaded out of their own opinion, by the ſmoothneſs of an Iriſh tale, it was impoſſible to eradicate, from among the bulk of the people, their own national traditions. Theſe traditions afterwards ſo much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scots nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, ſtrangers to the ancient language of their country, preſerved only from falling to the ground, ſo improbable a ſtory.

It was, during the period I have mentioned, that the Iriſh became acquainted with, and carried into their country, the compoſitions of Oſſian. The ſcene of many of the pieces being in Ireland, ſuggeſted firſt to them a hint, of making both heroes and poet natives of that iſland. In order to do this effectually, they found it neceſſary to reject the genuine poems, as every line was

pregnant with proofs of their Scottiſh original, and to dreſs up a fable, on the ſame ſubject, in their own language. So ill qualified, however, were their bards to effectuate this change, that amidſt all their deſires to make the *Fiona* Iriſhmen, they every now and then called them *Siol Albin*. It was, probably, after a ſucceſſion of ſome generations, that the bards had effrontery enough to eſtabliſh an Iriſh genealogy for *Fion*, and deduce him from the Mileſian race of kings. In ſome of the oldeſt Iriſh poems, on the ſubject, the great-grandfather of *Fion* is made a Scandinavian; and his heroes are often called SIOL LOCHLIN NA BEUM, *i. e. the race of Lochlin of wounds.* The only poem that runs up the family of *Fion* to Nuades Niveus, king of Ireland, is evidently not above a hundred and fifty years old; for, if I miſtake not, it mentions the Earl of Tyrone, ſo famous in Elizabeth's time.

This ſubject, perhaps, is purſued further than it deſerves; but a diſcuſſion of the pretenſions of Ireland to Oſſian, was become in ſome meaſure neceſſary. If the Iriſh poems, concerning the *Fiona* ſhould appear ridiculous, it is but juſtice to obſerve, that they are ſcarcely more ſo than the poems of other nations at that period. On other ſubjects, the bards of Ireland have diſplayed a genius worthy of any age or nation. It was, alone, in matters of antiquity, that they were monſtrous in their fables. Their love-ſonnets, and their elegies on the death of perſons worthy or renowned, abound with ſuch beautiful ſimplicity of ſentiment, and wild harmony of numbers, that they become more than an atonement for their errors in every other ſpecies of poetry. But the beauty of theſe pieces, depend ſo much on a certain *curioſa felicitas* of expreſſion in the original, that they muſt appear much to diſadvantage in another language.

A

CRITICAL DISSERTATION

ON THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN,

THE

SON OF FINGAL.

BY HUGH BLAIR, D.D.
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A

CRITICAL DISSERTATION

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THE

SON OF FINGAL.

AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient ſtate of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or ſongs. Hiſtory, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is ſeldom very inſtructive. The beginnings of ſociety, in every country, are involved in fabulous confuſion; and though they were not, they would furniſh few events worth recording. But, in every period of ſociety, human manners are a curious ſpectacle; and the moſt natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. Theſe preſent to us, what is much more valuable than the hiſtory of ſuch tranſactions as a rude age can afford: The hiſtory of human imagination and paſſion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the moſt artleſs ages: diſcovering what objects they admired, and what pleaſures they purſued, before thoſe refinements of ſociety had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diverſify the tranſactions, but diſguiſe the manners of mankind.

Beſides this merit, which ancient poems have with philoſophical obſervers of human nature, they have another with perſons of taſte. They promiſe ſome of the higheſt beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpoliſhed we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the ſame time, with

that enthuſiaſm, that vehemence and fire, which are the ſoul of poetry. For many circumſtances of thoſe times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical ſpirit. That ſtate, in which human nature ſhoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and paſſion.

In the infancy of ſocieties, men live ſcattered and diſperſed, in the midſt of ſolitary rural ſcenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and ſtrange; their wonder and ſurpriſe are frequently excited; and by the ſudden changes of fortune occurring in their unſettled ſtate of life, their paſſions are raiſed to the utmoſt. Their paſſions have nothing to reſtrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They diſplay themſelves to one another without diſguiſe; and converſe and act in the uncovered ſimplicity of nature. As their feelings are ſtrong, ſo their language, of itſelf, aſſumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they deſcribe every thing in the ſtrongeſt colours; which of courſe renders their ſpeech pictureſque and figurative. Figurative language owes its riſe chiefly to two cauſes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and paſſion over the form of expreſſion. Both theſe cauſes concur in the infancy of ſociety. Figures are commonly conſidered as artificial modes of ſpeech, deviſed by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined ſtate. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have uſed ſo many figures of ſtyle, as in thoſe rude ages, when, beſides the power of a warm imagination to ſuggeſt lively images, the want of proper and preciſe terms for the ideas they would expreſs, obliged them to have recourſe to circumlocution, metaphor, compariſon, and all thoſe ſubſtituted forms of expreſſion, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold metaphorical

ſtyle, than a modern European would adventure to uſe in an epic poem.

In the progreſs of ſociety, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to ſprightlineſs and ſublimity. As the world advances, the underſtanding gains ground upon the imagination; the underſtanding is more exerciſed; the imagination leſs. Fewer objects occur that are new or ſurpriſing. Men apply themſelves to trace the cauſes of things; they correct and refine one another; they ſubdue or diſguiſe their paſſions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform ſtandard of politeneſs and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from ſterility to copiouſneſs, and at the ſame time, from fervour and enthuſiaſm, to correctneſs and preciſion. Style becomes more chaſte; but leſs animated. The progreſs of the world in this reſpect, reſembles the progreſs of age in man. The powers of imagination are moſt vigorous and predominant in youth; thoſe of the underſtanding ripen more ſlowly, and often attain not their maturity, till the imagination begin to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently moſt glowing and animated in the firſt ſtages of ſociety. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleaſure on account of their livelineſs and vivacity; ſo the moſt ancient poems have often proved the greateſt favourites of nations.

Poetry has been ſaid to be more ancient than proſe; and however paradoxical ſuch an aſſertion may ſeem, yet, in a qualified ſenſe it is true. Men certainly never converſed with one another in regular numbers; but, even their ordinary language would, in ancient times, for the reaſons before aſſigned, approach to a poetical ſtyle; and the firſt compoſitions tranſmitted to poſterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal ſenſe, poems; that is, compoſitions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into ſome kind of numbers, and pronounced with a muſical modulation or tone. Muſic or

ſong has been found coeval with ſociety among the moſt barbarous nations. The only ſubjects which could prompt men, in their firſt rude ſtate, to utter their thoughts in compoſitions of any length, were ſuch as naturally aſſumed the tone of poetry; praiſes of their gods, or of their anceſtors; commemorations of their own warlike exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compoſitions, except ſongs or poems, could take ſuch hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preſerved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extenſive ſearch would diſcover a certain degree of reſemblance among all the moſt ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a ſimilar ſtate of manners, ſimilar objects and paſſions operating upon the imaginations of men, will ſtamp their productions with the ſame general character. Some diverſity will, no doubt, be occaſioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear ſuch reſembling features, as they do in the beginnings of ſociety. Its ſubſequent revolutions give riſe to the principal diſtinctions among nations; and divert into channels widely ſeparated, that current of human genius and manners, which, deſcends originally from one ſpring. What we have been long accuſtomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, becauſe ſome of the earlieſt poetical productions have come to us from the Eaſt, is probably no more oriental than occidental; it is the characteriſtical of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in ſome meaſure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Oſſian ſeem to furniſh a remarkable proof.

Our preſent ſubject leads us to inveſtigate the ancient poetical remains, not ſo much of the Eaſt, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the Northern nations; in order to diſcover whether the Gothic poetry has any

reſemblance to the Celtic or Galic, which we are about to conſider. Though the Goths, under which name we uſually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earlieſt times, had their poets and their ſongs. Their poets were diſtinguiſhed by the title of *Scalders*, and their ſongs were termed *Vyſes* †. Saxo Grammaticus, a Daniſh hiſtorian of conſiderable note, who flouriſhed in the thirteenth century, informs us that very many of theſe ſongs, containing the ancient traditionary ſtories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character; ſeveral of which he has tranſlated into Latin, and inſerted into his hiſtory. But his verſions are plainly ſo paraphra-

† Olaus Wormius, in the Appendix to his Treatiſe de Literatura Runica, has given a particular account of the Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from Runes, which ſignifies the Gothic letters. He informs us that there were no fewer than one hundred and thirty-ſix different kinds of meaſure or verſe uſed in their vyſes; and though we are accuſtomed to call rhyme a Gothic invention, he ſays expreſsly, that among all theſe meaſures, rhyme, or correſpondence of final ſyllables, was never employed. He analyſes the ſtructure of one of theſe kinds of verſe, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted, is written; which exhibits a very ſingular ſpecies of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of ſyllables, but chiefly upon the number of the ſyllables, and the diſpoſition of the letters. In every ſtanza was an equal number of lines; in every line ſix ſyllables. In each diſtich, it was requiſite that three words ſhould begin with the ſame letter; two of the correſponding words placed in the firſt line of the diſtich, the third, in the ſecond line. In each line were alſo required two ſyllables, but never the final ones formed either of the ſame conſonants, or ſame vowels. As an example of this meaſure, Olaus gives us theſe two Latin lines conſtructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verſe:

Chriſtus caput noſtrum
Coronet te bonis.

The initial letters of Chriſtus, Caput and Coronet, make the three correſponding letters of the diſtich. In the firſt line, the firſt ſyllables of Chriſtus and of noſtrum; in the ſecond line, the 'on' in coronet and in bonis make the requiſite correſpondence of ſyllables. Frequent inverſions and tranſpoſitions were permitted in this poetry; which would naturally follow from ſuch laborious attention to the collocation of words.

The curious on this ſubject may conſult likewiſe Dr. Hicks' Theſaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium; particularly the 23d chapter of his Grammatica Anglo Saxonica et Mæſo Gothica; where they will find a full account of the ſtructure of the Anglo-Saxon verſe, which nearly reſembled the Gothic. They will find alſo ſome ſpecimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr. Hicks has given from the work of one of the Daniſh ſcalders, intitled, Hervarer Saga, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the 6th volume of Miſcellany Poems, publiſhed by Mr Dryden.

ſtical, and forced into ſuch an imitation of the ſtyle and the meaſures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native ſpirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preſerved by Olaus Wormius in his book de Literatura Runica. It is an Epicedium, or funeral ſong, compoſed by Regner Lodbrog; and tranſlated by Olaus, word for word, from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the ſame time an eminent *Scalder* or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at laſt into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was thrown into priſon, and condemned to be deſtroyed by ſerpents. In this ſituation he ſolaced himſelf with rehearſing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine ſtanzas, of ten lines each; and every ſtanza begins with theſe words, Pugnavimus Enſibus, "We have fought with our ſwords." Olaus's verſion is in many places ſo obſcure as to be hardly intelligible. I have ſubjoined the whole below, exactly as he has publiſhed it; and ſhall tranſlate as much as may give the Engliſh reader an idea of the ſpirit and ſtrain of this kind of poetry †.

† 1.

Pugnavimus Enſibus
Haud poſt longum tempus
Cum in Gotlandia acceſſimus
Ad ſerpentis immenſi necem
Tunc impetravimus Thoram
Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
Quod ſerpentem transfodi
Hirſutam braccam ob illam cedem
Cuſpide ictum intuli in colubrum
Ferro lucidorum ſtupendiorum.

2.

Multum juvenis fui quando acquiſivimus
Orientem verſus in Oreonico freto
Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ
Et flavipedi avi
Accepimus ibidem ſonuerunt
Ad ſublimes galeas
Dura ferra magnam eſcam
Omnis erat occanus vulnus
Volavit corvus in ſanguine Caeſorum.

3.

Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
Quando viginti annos numeravimus
Et celebrem laudem comparavimus paſ-
Vicimus octo barones (ſim
In oriente ante Dimini portum
Aquilae impetravimus tunc ſufficientem
Hoſpitii ſumptum in illa ſtrage
Sudor decidit in vulnerum
Oceano perdidit exercitus aetatem.

4.

Pugnae facta copia
Cum Helſingianos poſtulavimus
Ad aulam Odini
Naves direximus in oſtium Viſtulae
Mucro potuit tum mordere
Omnis erat vulnus unda
Terra rubefacta Calido
Frendebat gladius in loricas
Gladius findebat Clypeos.

5.

Memina neminem tunc fugiſſe
Priuſquam in navibus
Heraudus in bello caderet
Non findit navibus
Alius baro praeſtantior
Mare ad portum

"We have fought with our ſwords. I was young, "when, towards the eaſt, in the bay of Oreon, we "made torrents of blood flow, to gorge the ravenous

In navibus longis poſt illum
Sic attulit princeps paſſim
Alacre in bellum cor.

6.

Exercitus abjecit Clypeos
Cum haſta volavit
Ardua ad virorum pectora
Momordit Searforum cautes
Gladius in pugna
Sanguineus erat Clypeus
Antequam Rafno rex caderet
Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
Calidus in loricas ſudor.

7

Habere potuerunt tum corvi
Ante Indirorum inſulas
Sufficientem prædam dilaniandam
Acquiſivimus feris carnivoris
Plenum prandium unico actu
Difficile erat unius facere mentionem
Oriente ſole
Spicula vidi pungere
Propulerunt arcus ex ſe ferra.

8.

Altum mugierunt enſes
Antequam in Laneo campo
Eiſlinus rex cecidit
Proceſſimus auro ditati
Ad terram proſtratorum dimicandum
Gladius ſecuit Clypeorum
Picturas in galearem conventu
Cervicum muſtum ex vulneribus
Diffuſum per cerebrum fiſſum.

9.

Tenuimus Clypeos in ſanguine
Cum haſtam unximus
Ante Boring holmum
Telorum nubes diſrumpunt Clypeum
Extruſit arcus ex ſe metallum
Volnir cecidit in conflictu
Non erat illo rex major
Cæſi diſperſi late per littora
Feræ amplectebantur eſcam.

10.

Pugna manifeſte creſcebat
Antequam Freyr rex caderet
In Flandrorum terra
Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
Sanguine illitus in auream
Loricam in pugna
Durus armorum mucro olim
Virgo deploravit matutinam lanienam
Multa præda dabatur feris.

11.

Centies centenos vidi jacere
In navibus
Ubi Æglanes vocatur
Navigavimus ad pugnam
Per ſex dies antequam exercitus caderet
Tranſegimus mucronum miſſum
In exortu ſolis
Cuactus eſt pro noſtris gladiis
Valdioſur in bello occumbere.

12.

Ruit pluvia ſanguinis de gladiis
Præceps in Bardafyrde
Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
Murmuravit arcus ubi mucro
Acriter mordebat Loricas
In conflictu
Odini Pileus Galea
Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus (guineo
Venenate acutus conſperſus ſudore ſan

13.

Tenuimus magica ſcuta
Alte in pugnæ ludo
Ante Hiadningum ſinum
Videre licuit tum viros
Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
In gladiatorio murmure
Galeæ attritæ virorum
Erat ſicut ſplendidam virginem
In lecto juxta ſe collocare.

14.

Dura venit tempeſtas Clypeis
Cadavir cecidit in terram
In Nortumbria
Erat circa matutinum tempus
Hominibus neceſſum erat fuger
Ex prælio ubi acute
Caſſidis campos mordebant gladii
Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
In primaria ſede oſculari.

15.

Herthioſe evaſit fortunatus
In Auſtralibus Orcadibus ipſe
Victoriæ in noſtris hominibus
Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
Rogvaldus occumbere
Iſte venit ſummus ſuper accipitres
Luctus in gladiorum ludo
Strenue jactabat concuſſor
Galeæ ſanguinis teli.

16.

Quilibet jacebat tranſverſim ſupra alium

" beaſt of prey, and the yellow-footed bird. There
" reſounded the hard ſteel upon the lofty helmets of

Gaudebat pugna lætus
Accipiter ob gladiorum ludum
Non fecit aquilam aut aprum
Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
Conventus fiebat ferri & Clypei
Marſlanus rex jejunis
Fiebat in vedræ linu
Præda data corvis.

17.

Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
Mane ante machæram
Virum in mucronum diſſidio
Filio meo incidit mature
Gladius juxta cor
Egillus fecit Agnerum ſpoliatum
Impertertitum virum vita
Sonuit lancea prope Hamdi
Criſcam loricam ſplendebant vexilla.

18.

Verborum tenaces vidi diſſecare
Haut minutim pro lupis
Endili maris enſibus
Erat per Hebdomadæ ſpacium
Quaſi mulieres vinum apportarent
Rubefactæ erant naves
Valde in ſtrepitu armorum
Sciſſa erat lorica
In Scioldungorum prælio.

19.

Pulchricomum vidi crepuſculaſcere
Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
Erat ſicut calidum balneum
Vinei vaſis nympha portaret
Nos in Ilæ freto
Antiquam Orn rex caderet
Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
Hoc invertit virorum vitam.

20.

Egimus gladiorum ad cædem
Ludum in Lindis inſula
Cum regib[illegible] tribus
Pauci potuerunt inde lætari
Cecidit multus in ictum ferarum
Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
Ut fatur inde diſcederet
Hybernorum ſanguis in occanum
Copioſe decidit per mactationis tempus.

21.

Alte gladias mordebat Clypeos
Tunc cum aurei coloris
Haſta fricabat loricas
Videre licuit in Onlugs inſula
Per ſecula multum poſt.
Ibi fuit ad gladiorum ludos
Reges proceſſerunt
Rubicundum erat circa inſulam
Ar volans Draco vulnerum.

22.

Quid eſt viro forti morte certius
Etſi ipſe in armorum nimbo
Adverſus collocatus ſit
Sæpe deplorat ætatem
Qui nunquam premitur
Malum ferunt timidum incitare
Aquilam ad gladiorum ludum
Meticuloſus venit nuſpiam
Cordi ſuo uſu.

23.

Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Audax eſſe in fremitu armorum.

24.

Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata ſequimur
Rarus tranſgreditur fata Parcarum
Non deſtinavi Ellae
De vitae exitu meae
Cum ego ſanguinem ſemimortuus tege-(rem
Et naves in aquos protruſi
Paſſim impetravimus tum feris
Eſcam in Scotiae ſinubus.

25.

Hoc ridere me facit ſemper
Quod balderi patris ſcamna
Parata ſcio in aula
Bibemus cereviſiam brevi
Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
Magnifici in Odini domibus
Non venio deſperabundis
Verbis ad Odini aulam.

26.

Hic vellent nunc omnes
Filii Aflaugae gladiis
Amarum bellum excitare
Si exacte ſcirent
Calamitates noſtras
Quem non pauci angues
Venenati me diſcerpunt
Matrem accepi meis
Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

" men. The whole ocean was one wound. The crow " waded in the blood of the ſlain. When we had " numbered twenty years, we lifted our ſpears on " high, and every where ſpread our renown. Eight " barons we overcame in the eaſt, before the port of " Diminum; and plentifully we feaſted the eagle in " that ſlaughter. The warm ſtream of wounds ran in- " to the ocean. The army fell before us. When we " ſteered our ſhips into the mouth of the Viſtula, we " ſent the Helſingians to the hall of Odion. Then did " the ſword bite. The waters were all one wound. " The earth was dyed red with the warm ſtream. The " ſword rung upon the coats of mail, and clove the " bucklers in twain. None fled on that day, till a- " mong his ſhips Heraudus fell. Than him no braver " baron cleaves the ſea with ſhips; a chearful heart did " he ever bring to the combat. Then the hoſt threw " away their ſhields, when the upliſted ſpear flew at " the breaſts of heroes. The ſword bit the Scarfian " rocks; bloody was the ſhield in battle, until Rafno " the king was ſlain. From the heads of warriors the " warm ſweat ſtreamed down their armour. The " crows around the Indirian iſlands had an ample prey. " It were difficult to ſingle out one among ſo many " deaths. At the riſing of the ſun I beheld the ſpears " piercing the bodies of foes, and the bows throwing " forth their ſteel-pointed arrows. Loud roared the " ſwords in the plains of Lano. The virgin long be- " wailed the ſlaughter of that morning." In this ſtrain

27.

Valde inclinatur ad haereditatem
Crudele ſtat nocumentum a vipera
Anguis inhabitat aulum cordis
Speramus alterius ad Othini
Virgam in Ellae ſanguine
Filiis meis liveſcet
Sua ira rubeſcet
Non acres juvenes
Seſſionem tranquillam facient.

28.

Habeo quinquagies
Praelia ſub ſignis facta
Ex belli invitatione & femel
Maxime putavi hominum
Quod me futurus eſſet
Juvenis didici mucronem rubefacere
Alius rex praeſtantior
Nos Aſae invitabunt
Non eſt lugenda mors.

29.

Fert animus finire
Invitant me Dyſae
Quas ex Othini Aula
Othinus mihi miſit
Lactus cerevisiam cum Aſis
In ſuprema tede libam
Vitae elapſae ſunt horae
Ridens moriar.

the poet continues to deſcribe ſeveral other military exploits. The images are not much varied; the noiſe of arms, the ſtreaming of blood, and the feaſting the birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the death of two of his ſons in battle; and the lamentation he deſcribes as made for one of them is very ſingular. A Grecian or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins or nymphs of the wood, bewailing the untimely fall of a young hero. But, ſays our Gothic poet, "when Rogvaldus was ſlain, for him mourned all the "hawks of heaven," as lamenting a benefactor who had ſo liberally ſupplied them with prey; "for boldly," as he adds, "in the ſtrife of ſwords, did the breaker of "helmets, throw the ſpear of blood."

The poem concludes with ſentiments of the higheſt bravery and contempt of death. "What is more cer- "tain to the brave man than death, though amidſt the "ſtorm of ſwords, he ſtands always ready to oppoſe it? "He only regrets this life who hath never known di- "ſtreſs. The timorous man allures the devouring eagle "to the field of battle. The coward, wherever he "comes is uſeleſs to himſelf. This I eſteem honour- "able, that the youth ſhould advance to the combat "fairly matched one againſt another; nor man retreat "from man. Long was this the warrior's higheſt glo- "ry. He who aſpires to the love of virgins, ought al- "ways to be foremoſt in the roar of arms. It appears "to me of truth, that we are led by the Fates. Sel- "dom can any overcome the appointment of deſtiny. "Little did I foreſee that Ella† was to have my life in "his hands, in that day when fainting I concealed my "blood, and puſhed forth my ſhips into the waves; af- "ter we had ſpread a repaſt for the beaſts of prey, "throughout the Scottiſh bays. But this makes me "always rejoice that in the halls of our father Balder "[or Odin] I know there are ſeats prepared, where, "in a ſhort time, we ſhall be drinking ale out of the "hollow ſkulls of our enemies. In the houſe of the "mighty Odin, no brave man laments death. I come

† This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

" not with the voice of deſpair to Odin's hall. How
" eagerly would all the ſons of Aſlauga now ruſh to
" war, did they know the diſtreſs of their father,
" whom a multitude of venomous ſerpents tear?
" I have given to my children a mother who hath
" filled their hearts with valour. I am faſt approach-
" ing to my end. A cruel death awaits me from the
" viper's bite. A ſnake dwells in the midſt of my
" heart. I hope that the ſword of ſome of my ſons
" ſhall yet be ſtained with the blood of Ella. The
" valiant youths will wax red with anger, and will not
" ſit in peace. Fifty and one times have I reared the
" ſtandard in battle. In my youth I learned to dye
" the ſword in blood: my hope was then, that no king
" among men would be more renowned than me.
" The goddeſſes of death will now ſoon call me; I
" muſt not mourn my death. Now I end my ſong.
" The goddeſſes invite me away; they whom Odin
" has ſent to me from his hall. I will ſit upon a lofty
" ſeat and drink ale joyfully with the goddeſſes of death.
" The hours of my life are run out. I will ſmile when
" I die."

This is ſuch poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a moſt ferocious ſpirit. It is wild, harſh and irregular; but at the ſame time animated and ſtrong; the ſtyle, in the original, full of inverſions, and, as we learn from ſome of Olaus's notes, higly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Oſſian, a very different ſcene preſents itſelf. There we find the fire and the enthuſiaſm of the moſt early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderneſs, and even delicacy of ſentiment, greatly predominant over fierceneſs and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the ſofteſt feelings, and at the ſame time elevated with the higheſt ideas of magnanimity, generoſity, and true heroiſm. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Oſſian, it is like paſſing from a ſavage deſert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? Or by what

means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to theſe poems? This is a curious point; and requires to be illuſtrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is paſt all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion proves it to a full demonſtration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether diſtinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the weſt of Europe; but ſeem to have had their moſt full and complete eſtabliſhment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we ſeldom fail to hear of their druids and their bards; the inſtitution of which two orders, was the capital diſtinction of their manners and policy. The druids were their philoſophers and prieſts; the bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: And both theſe orders of men, ſeem to have ſubſiſted among them, as chief members of the ſtate, from time immemorial†. We muſt not therefore imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a groſs and rude nation. They poſſeſſed from very remote ages a formed ſyſtem of diſcipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and laſting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this expreſs teſtimony, that there flouriſhed among them the ſtudy of the moſt laudable arts; introduced by the bards, whoſe office it was to ſing in heroic verſe, the gallant actions of illuſtrious men; and by the druids, who lived together in colleges or ſocieties, after the Pythagorian manner, and philoſophizing upon the higheſt ſubjects, aſſerted the immortality of the human ſoul‖. Though

† There are three tribes who are reſpected in different degrees, viz. the bards, the prieſts, and druids. The bards are the poets, and thoſe who record the actions of their heroes.---Strabo, B. IV.

There are likewiſe among them the compoſers of poems, whom they call bards; and theſe with inſtruments like the lyre, celebrate the praiſes of ſome, and rail againſt others.---Diod. Sicul. B. V.

And thoſe who are called bards, are their oracles, and theſe bards are poets who ſing praiſes in odes.---Poſidonius ap. Athenæum, B. VI.

‖ Per haec loca (ſpeaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis, viguere ſtudia laudabilium doctrinarum; inchoata per bardos & euhages & druidas. Et bardi quidem fortia virorum illuſtrium facta heroicis compoſita verſibus cum dulcibus lyrae modulis cantitarunt. Euhages vero ſcrutantes ſeriem & ſublimia naturae pau-

Julius Cæsar, in his account of Gaul, does not expressly mention the bards, yet it is plain that under the title of druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the bards, who, it is probable, were the disciples of the druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deserves remark, that according to his account, the druidical institution first took rise in Britain, and passed from thence into Gaul; so that they who aspired to be thorough masters of that learning were wont to resort to Britain. He adds too, that such as were to be initiated among the druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verses, insomuch that some employed twenty years in this course of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record these poems in writing, but sacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race†.

So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like the Greek Ἀοιδοι or Rhapsodists, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment. We find them, according to the testimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Augustus Cæsar; and we find them remaining under the same name, and exercising the same functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almost down to our own times. It is well known that in both these countries, every *Regulus* or chief had his own bard, who was considered as an officer of rank in his court; and had lands assigned him, which descended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were held, many instances occur in Ossian's poems. On all important occasions, they were the ambassadors between contending

† dere conabantur. Inter hos, druidae ingeniis celsiores, ut auctoritas Pythagorae decrevit, sodalitiis adstricti consortiis, quaestionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti sunt; & despectantes humana pronuntiarunt animas immortales.—Amm. Marcellinus, l. 15. cap. 9.

Vid. Caesar de Bello Gall. lib. 6.

chiefs; and their perſons were held ſacred. "Cairbar "feared to ſtretch his ſword to the bards, though his "ſoul was dark. Looſe the bards, ſaid his brother "Cathmor, they are ſons of other times. Their voice "ſhall be heard in other ages, when the kings of Te-"mora have failed."

From all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in ſo high a degree to poetry, and to have made it ſo much their ſtudy from the earlieſt times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at firſt ſight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accuſtomed to call barbarous. Barbarity I muſt obſerve, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them it excludes poliſhed manners, it is however, not inconſiſtent with generous ſentiments and tender affections †. What degrees of friendſhip, love, and heroiſm, may poſſibly be found to prevail in a rude ſtate of ſociety, no one can ſay. Aſtoniſhed inſtances of them we know, from hiſtory, have ſometimes appeared: and a few characters diſtinguiſhed by thoſe high qualities, might lay a foundation for a ſet of manners being introduced into the ſongs of the bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the uſual poetical licence,

† Surely among the wild Laplanders, if any where, barbarity is in its moſt perfect ſtate. Yet their love ſongs which Scheffer has given us in his Lapponia, are a proof that natural tenderneſs of ſentiment may be found in a country, into which the leaſt glimmering of ſcience has never penetrated. To moſt Engliſh readers theſe ſongs are well known by the elegant tranſlations of them in the Spectator, No. 366 and 406. I ſhall ſubjoin Scheffer's Latin verſion of one of them, which has the appearance of being ſtrictly literal.

Sol, clariſſimum emitte lumen in paludem Orra. Si eniſus in ſumma piceārum cacumina ſcirem me viſurum Orra paludem, in ea eniterer, ut viderem inter quos amica, mea eſſet flores; omnes ſuſcinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos praeſecarem, hos virentes ramos. Curſum nubium eſſem ſecutus, quae iter ſuum iſtituunt verſus paludem Orra, ſi ad te volare poſſem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi deſunt alae, alae querquedulae pedeſque, anſerum pedes plantaeve bonae, quae deferre me valeant ad te. Satis expectaſti diu, per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundiſſimis, corde tuo amiciſſimo. Quod ſi longiſſime velles effugere, cito tamen te conſequerer. Quid firmius validiuſve eſſe poteſt quam contorti nervica-tenaeve ferreae, quae duriſſime ligant? Sic amor contorquet caput noſtrum, mutat cogitationes & ſententias. Puerorum voluntas, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longae cogitationes. Quos ſi audirem omnes, a via, a via juſta declinarem. Unum eſt conſilium quod capiam; ita ſcio viam rectiorem me reperturum.---Scheſferi Lapponia, Cap. 25.

than the real manners of the country. In particular, with reſpect to heroiſm; the great employment of the Celtic bards, was to delineate the characters, and ſing the praiſes of heroes. So Lucan:

Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
Laubibus in longam vates diffunditis aevum
Plurima ſecuri fudiſtis carmina bardi. Pharſ. l. 1.

Now when we conſider a college or order of men, who, cultivating poetry throughout a long ſeries of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroiſm; who had all the poems and panegyrics, which were compoſed by their predeceſſors, handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to outſtrip thoſe who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their ſongs with the higheſt luſtre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which diſtinguiſh a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably be the firſt ideas of heroiſm occurring to a barbarous people: But no ſooner had ſuch ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind eaſily opens to the native repreſentations of human perfection, they would be ſeized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyrics; they would afford materials for ſucceeding bards to work upon, and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For ſuch ſongs as theſe, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment, muſt have had a very conſiderable influence in propagating among them real manners nearly approaching to the poetical; and in forming even ſuch a hero as Fingal. Eſpecially when we conſider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which in a ſavage ſtate, man could obtain over man, the chief was Fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the ſongs of bards†.

† When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch bards. This

Having made theſe remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I ſhall next conſider the particular advantages which Oſſian poſſeſſed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I juſt now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other anceſtors of Fingal, are ſpoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable paſſage, Oſſian deſcribes himſelf as living in a ſort of claſſical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the ſongs of bards; and points at a period of darkneſs and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. "His words," ſays he, "came only by halves to our ears; they were dark "as the tales of other times, before the light of the "ſong aroſe." Oſſian, himſelf, appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquiſite ſenſibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is ſo often an attendant on great genius; and ſuſceptible equally of ſtrong and of ſoft emotions. He was not only a profeſſed bard, educated with care, as we may eaſily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he ſhews us himſelf, in intimate friendſhip with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior alſo; and the ſon of the moſt renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumſtances, uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he ſings of battles in which he had fought and overcome; he had beheld the moſt illuſtrious ſcenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroiſm in war, and magnificence in peace. For however rude the magnificence of thoſe times may ſeem to us, we muſt remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative; and that the age of Fingal was an æra of diſtinguiſhed ſplendor in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a

cruel policy plainly ſhews, how great an influence he imagined the ſongs of theſe bards to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch bards were of the ſame Celtic race with the Scottiſh and Iriſh.

conſiderable territory; he was enriched with the ſpoils of the Roman province; he was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all reſpects a perſonage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of clans, who lived in the ſame country, after a more extenſive monarchy was eſtabliſhed.

The manners of Oſſian's age, ſo far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two diſpiriting vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetouſneſs and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amuſements, the muſic of bards and "the feaſt of ſhells." The great object purſued by heroic ſpirits, was "to receive their fame," that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the ſongs of bards; and "to have their name on the four gray ſtones." To die unlamented by a bard, was deemed ſo great a misfortune, as even to diſturb their ghoſts in another ſtate. "They wander in thick miſts beſide the reedy lake; "but never ſhall they riſe, without the ſong, to the "dwelling of winds." After death, they expected to follow employments of the ſame nature with thoſe which had amuſed them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to purſue airy deer, and to liſten to their praiſe in the mouths of bards. In ſuch times as theſe, in a country where poetry had been ſo long cultivated, and ſo highly honoured, is it any wonder that among the race and ſucceſſion of bards, one Homer ſhould ariſe; a man who, endowed with a natural and happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting in the courſe of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, ſhould attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages?

The compoſitions of Oſſian are ſo ſtrongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were

no external proof to ſupport that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taſte, could hesitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great ſtages through which men ſucceſſively paſs in the progreſs of ſociety. The firſt and earlieſt is the life of hunters; paſturage ſucceeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and laſtly, commerce. Throughout Oſſian's poems, we plainly find ourſelves in the firſt of theſe periods of ſociety; during which, hunting was the chief employments of men, and the principal method of their procuring ſubſiſtence. Paſturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the caſe of a divorce, but the alluſions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture, we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned except that of navigation and of working in iron†. Every thing preſents to us the moſt ſimple and unimproved manners. At their feaſts, the heroes prepared their own repaſt; they ſat round the light of the burning oak; the wind lifted their locks, and whiſtled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the neceſſaries of life was known to them only as the ſpoil of the Roman province; "the gold of the ſtranger; the lights of the ſtranger; "the ſteeds of the ſtranger; the children of the rein."

This repreſentation of Oſſian's times, muſt ſtrike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is compa-

† Their ſkill in navigation need not at all ſurprize us. Living in the weſtern iſlands, along the coaſt, or in a country which is every where interſected with arms of the ſea, one of the firſt objects of their attention, from the earlieſt time, muſt have been how to traverſe the waters. Hence that knowledge of the ſtars, ſo neceſſary for guiding them by night, of which we find ſeveral traces in Oſſian's works; particularly in the beautiful deſcription of Cathmor's ſhield, in the ſeventh book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early ſtudied. Piratical incurſions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the firſt exploits which diſtinguiſhed them in the world. Even the ſavage Americans were at their firſt diſcovery found to poſſeſs the moſt ſurpriſing ſkill and dexterity in navigating their immenſe lakes and rivers.

The deſcription of Cuchullin's chariot, in the firſt book of Fingal, has been objected to by ſome, as repreſenting greater magnificence than is conſiſtent with the ſuppoſed poverty of that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horſe-litter; and the gems mentioned in the deſcription, are no other than the ſhining ſtones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the weſtern coaſt of Scotland.

red with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherſon has preſerved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are repreſented as paſſing the evening in the houſe of a chief, and each of them ſeparately giving his deſcription of the night. The night ſcenery is beautiful; and the author has plainly imitated the ſtyle and manner of Oſſian: But he has allowed ſome images to appear which betray a later period of ſociety. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows ſeeking ſhelter, the ſhepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the ſhocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempeſts. Whereas, in Oſſian's works, from beginning to end, all is conſiſtent; no modern alluſion drops from him; but every where, the ſame face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The graſs of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thiſtle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landſcapes. "The deſert," ſays Fingal, "is enough to me, with all its woods and deer."

The circle of ideas and tranſactions, is no wider than ſuits ſuch an age: Nor any greater diverſity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally diſplay. Valour and bodily ſtrength are the admired qualities. Contentions ariſe, as is uſual among ſavage nations, from the ſlighteſt cauſes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feaſt, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, riſe to avenge the wrong. The heroes ſhow refinement of ſentiment, indeed, on ſeveral occaſions, but none of manners. They ſpeak of their paſt actions with freedom, boaſt of their exploits, and ſing their own praiſe. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known or uſed. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but ſtriking a ſhield, or raiſing a loud cry. And hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned, as a neceſſary qualification of a great general, like the βοὴν αγαθὸς Μενελαος of Homer. Of military diſcipline or

ſkill, they appear to have been entirely deſtitute. Their armies ſeem not to have been numerous; their battles were diſorderly; and terminated, for the moſt part by a perſonal combat, or wreſtling of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard ſung the ſong of peace, and the battle ceaſed along the field."

The manner of compoſition bears all the marks of the greateſt antiquity. No artful tranſitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; ſuch as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of compoſition were more ſtudied and known; but a ſtyle always rapid and vehement; in narration conciſe even to abruptneſs, and leaving ſeveral circumſtances to be ſupplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative caſt, which, as I before ſhewed, partly a glowing and undiſciplined imagination, partly the ſterility of language and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early ſpeech of nations; and in ſeveral reſpects, it carries a remarkable reſemblance to the ſtyle of the Old Teſtament. It deſerves particular notice, as one of the moſt genuine and deciſive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms or abſtract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Oſſian's works. The ideas of men, at firſt, were all particular. They had not words to expreſs general conceptions. Theſe were the conſequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of ſpeech. Oſſian, accordingly, almoſt never expreſſes himſelf in the abſtract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he ſaw around him. A public, a community, the univerſe, were conceptions beyond his ſphere. Even a mountain, a ſea, or a lake, which he has occaſion to mention, though only in a ſimile, are for the moſt part particularized; it is the hill of Cromla, the ſtorm of the ſea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expreſſion, which, whilſt it is characteriſtical of ancient ages, is at the ſame time highly favourable to deſcriptive poetry. For the ſame reaſons, perſonification is a poetical figure not very common

with Offian. Inanimate objects, ſuch as winds, trees, flowers, he ſometimes perſonifies with great beauty. But the perſonifications which are ſo familiar to later poets of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the reſt of that claſs, were unknown to our Celtic bard. Theſe where modes of conception too abſtract for his age.

All theſe are marks ſo undoubted, and ſome of them too, ſo nice and delicate, of the moſt early times, as put the high antiquity of theſe poems out of queſtion. Eſpecially when we conſider, that if there had been any impoſture in this caſe, it muſt have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as, up to this period, both by manuſcripts, and by the teſtimony of a multitude of living witneſſes, concerning the incontrovertible tradition of theſe poems, they can clearly be traced. Now, this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a compoſition of this kind, which it may not be ſuppoſed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thouſand years before. To ſuppoſe that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the Highlands to have been in a ſtate of groſs ignorance and barbarity, there ſhould have ariſen in that country a poet, of ſuch exquiſite genius, and of ſuch deep knowledge of mankind, and of hiſtory, as to diveſt himſelf of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a juſt and natural picture of a ſtate of ſociety ancienter by a thouſand years; one who could ſupport this counterfeited antiquity through ſuch a large collection of poems, without the leaſt inconſiſtency; and who, poſſeſſed of all this genius and art, had at the ſame time the ſelf-denial of concealing himſelf, and of aſcribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the impoſture being detected; is a ſuppoſition that tranſcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, beſides, two other circumſtances to be attended to ſtill of greater weight, if poſſible, againſt this hypotheſis. One is, the total abſence of religious ideas from this work; for which the tranſlator has, in

his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Offian. The druidical ſuperſtition was, in the days of Offian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reaſons, odious to the family of Fingal; whilſt the Chriſtian faith was not yet eſtabliſhed. But had it been the work of one, to whom the ideas of Chriſtianity were familiar from his infancy; and who had ſuperadded to them alſo the bigotted ſuperſtition of a dark age and country; it is impoſſible but in ſome paſſage or other, the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumſtance is, the entire ſilence which reigns with reſpect to all the great clans or families, which are now eſtabliſhed in the Highlands. The origin of theſe ſeveral clans is known to be very ancient: And it is as well known, that there is no paſſion by which a native Highlander is more diſtinguiſhed, than by attachment to his clan, and jealouſy for its honour. That a Highland bard, in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, ſhould have inſerted no circumſtance which pointed out the riſe of his clan, which aſcertained its antiquity, or increaſed its glory, is of all ſuppoſitions that can be formed, the moſt improbable; and the ſilence on this head amounts to a demonſtration that the author lived before any of the preſent great clans were formed or known.

Aſſuming it then, as we well may, for certainty, that the poems now under conſideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity; I proceed to make ſome remarks upon their general ſpirit and ſtrain. The two great characteriſtics of Offian's poetry are, tenderneſs and ſublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of ſolemnity and ſerioufneſs is diffuſed over the whole. Offian is, perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himſelf down into the light and amuſing ſtrain; which I readily admit to be no ſmall diſadvantage to him, with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key note is ſtruck at the beginning, and ſupported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced but what is perfectly con-

cordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded, are all ſerious and grave; the ſcenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the ſea ſhore; the mountain ſhaded with miſt; the torrent ruſhing through a ſolitary valley; the ſcattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moſs; all produce a ſolemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Oſſian an imagination that ſports itſelf, and dreſſes out gay trifles to pleaſe the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deſerves to be ſtyled, *The Poetry of the Heart.* It is a heart penetrated with noble ſentiments, and with ſublime and tender paſſions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itſelf forth. Oſſian did not write, like modern poets, to pleaſe readers and critics. He ſung from the love of poetry and ſong. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flouriſhed; to recal the affecting incidents of his life; to dwell upon his paſt wars, and loves, and friendſhips; till, as he expreſſes it himſelf, "there comes a voice to Oſſian and "awakes his ſoul. It is the voice of years that are gone; "they roll before me with all their deeds;" and under this poetic inſpiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we ſhould ſo often hear, and acknowledge in his ſtrains, the powerful and ever-pleaſing voice of nature.

------Arte, natura potentior omni.---
Eſt Deus in nobis, agitante caleſcimus illo.

It is neceſſary here to obſerve, that the beauties of Oſſian's writings cannot be felt by thoſe who have given them only a ſingle or a haſty peruſal. His manner is ſo different from that of the poets, to whom we are moſt accuſtomed; his ſtyle is ſo conciſe, and ſo much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at ſuch a ſtretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at firſt apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleaſed. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impoſſible but his beauties muſt open to every reader who is capable of ſenſibility. Thoſe who have the higheſt degree of it, will reliſh them the moſt.

As Homer is of all the great poets, the one whoſe manner, and whoſe times come the neareſt to Oſſian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in ſome inſtances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thouſand years before Oſſian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the ſtate of ſociety, that we are to judge of reſembling times. The Greek has, in ſeveral points, a manifeſt ſuperiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he poſſeſſes a larger compaſs of ideas; has more diverſity in his characters; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of theſe particulars, Oſſian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where ſociety was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built and flouriſhing; laws inſtituted; order, diſcipline, and arts begun. His field of obſervation was much larger and more ſplendid; his knowledge, of courſe, more extenſive; his mind alſo, it ſhall be granted more penetrating. But, if Oſſian's ideas and objects be leſs diverſified than thoſe of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fitteſt for poetry: the bravery and generoſity of heroes, the tenderneſs of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undiſſipated mind broods over them more; they ſtrike the imagination, and fire the paſſions in a higher degree; and of conſequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the ſame events when ſcattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and ſprightly poet than Oſſian. You diſcern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Oſſian uniformly maintains the gravity and ſolemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great meaſure to be accounted for from the different ſituations in which they lived, partly perſonal, and partly national. Oſſian had ſurvived all his friends, and was diſpoſed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But beſides this, cheerfulneſs is one of the many bleſſings which we owe to form-

ed ſociety. The ſolitary wild ſtate is always a ſerious one. Bating the ſudden and violent burſts of mirth, which ſometimes break forth at their dances and feaſts, the ſavage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be alſo remarked in Oſſian. On all occaſions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a deſcription, than is juſt ſufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flaſhes and vaniſhes. Homer is more extended in his deſcriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumſtances. Both the poets are dramatic; that is, they introduce their perſonages frequently ſpeaking before us. But Oſſian is conciſe and rapid in his ſpeeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had alſo ſome portion of the Greek loquacity. His ſpeeches indeed are highly characteriſtical; and to them we are much indebted for that admirable diſplay he has given of human nature. Yet, if he be tedious any where, it is in theſe: ſome of them trifling, and ſome of them plainly unſeaſonable. Both poets are eminently ſublime; but a difference may be remarked in the ſpecies of their ſublimity. Homer's ſublimity is accompanied with more impetuoſity and fire; Oſſian's with more of a ſolemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Oſſian elevates, and fixes you in aſtoniſhment. Homer is moſt ſublime in actions and battles; Oſſian, in deſcription and ſentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chuſes to exert it, has great power; but Oſſian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderneſs far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to ſeize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of ſentiment, the pre-eminence muſt clearly be given to Oſſian. This is indeed a ſurpriſing circumſtance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard ſhould be diſtinguiſhed to ſuch a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but

even thoſe of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by thoſe of Oſſian.

After theſe general obſervations on the genius and ſpirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view, and more accurate examination of his works: and as Fingal is the firſt great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuſe the title of an epic poem to Fingal, becauſe it is not in every particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere ſqueamiſhneſs and pedantry of criticiſm. Examined even according to Ariſtotle's rules, it will be found to have all the eſſential requiſites of a true and regular epic; and to have ſeveral of them in ſo high a degree, as at firſt view to raiſe our aſtoniſhment on finding Oſſian's compoſition ſo agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our aſtoniſhment will ceaſe, when we conſider from what ſource Ariſtotle drew thoſe rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticiſm than Oſſian. But guided by nature, he compoſed in verſe a regular ſtory, founded on heroic actions, which all poſterity admired. Ariſtotle, with great ſagacity and penetration, traced the cauſes of this general admiration. He obſerved what it was in Homer's compoſition, and in the conduct of his ſtory, which gave it ſuch power to pleaſe; from this obſervation he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and pleaſe like Homer; and to a compoſition formed according to ſuch rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence his whole ſyſtem aroſe. Ariſtotle ſtudied nature in Homer. Homer and Oſſian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there ſhould be ſuch agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Ariſtotle concerning an epic poem, are theſe: That the action which is the ground work of the poem, ſhould be one, complete, and great; that it ſhould be feigned, not merely hiſtorical; that it ſhould be enlivened with characters and manners; and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of theſe, it may perhaps

be aſked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Boſſu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illuſtrate ſome moral truth. The poet, ſays this critic, muſt begin with fixing on ſome maxim, or inſtruction, which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æſop's, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus ſettled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary hiſtory for names and incidents, to give his fable ſome air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion, enter into the mind of a critic. We may ſafely pronounce, that he who ſhould compoſe an epic poem after this manner, who ſhould firſt lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his perſonages and actors, might deliver indeed very ſound inſtruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the leaſt doubt that the firſt object which ſtrikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or ſubject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any ſubject a poet can chuſe for ſuch a work, but will afford ſome general moral inſtruction. An epic poem is, by its nature, one of the moſt moral of all poetical compoſitions: But its moral tendency is by no means to be limited to ſome common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the ſtory. It ariſes from the admiration of heroic actions, which ſuch a compoſition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raiſe, whilſt we read it; from the happy impreſſion which all the parts ſeparately, as well as the whole taken together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be ſtill inſiſted on, Fingal obviouſly furniſhes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That wiſdom and bravery always triumph over brutal force; or another nobler ſtill: That the moſt complete victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generoſity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the epic action, which, of all Ariſtotle's rules, is the chief and moſt material, is ſo ſtrictly pre-

ſerved in Fingal, that it muſt be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what ariſes from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic juſtly cenſures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterpriſe, the deliverance of Ireland from the invaſion of Swaran: An enterpriſe which has ſurely the full heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a conſtant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole: And as the action is one and great, ſo it is an entire or complete action. For we find, as the critic father requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; a nodus, or intrigue in the poem; difficulties occurring through Cuchullin's raſhneſs and bad ſucceſs; thoſe difficulties gradually ſurmounted; and at laſt the work conducted to that happy concluſion which is held eſſential to epic poetry. Unity is indeed obſerved with greater exactneſs in Fingal, than in almoſt any other epic compoſition. For not only is unity of ſubject maintained, but that of time and place alſo. The autumn is clearly pointed out as the ſeaſon of the action; and from beginning to end the ſcene is never ſhifted from the heath of Lena, along the ſea-ſhore. The duration of the action in Fingal, is much ſhorter than in the Iliad or Æneid. But ſure, there may be ſhorter as well as longer heroic poems; and if the authority of Ariſtotle be alſo required for this, he ſays expreſsly that the epic compoſition is indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the action of the Iliad laſts only forty-ſeven days, whilſt that of the Æneid is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of Fingal, there reigns that grandeur of ſentiment, ſtyle, and imagery, which ought ever to diſtinguiſh this high ſpecies of poetry. The ſtory is conducted with no ſmall art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with Swaran; but haſtening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a moſt happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace.

Semper ad eventum feſtinat, & in medias res,
Non ſecus ac notas, auditorem rapit---
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo. De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muſe, for he acknowledged none; but his occaſional addreſſes to Malvina, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muſe. He ſets out with no formal propoſition of his ſubject; but the ſubject naturally and eaſily unfolds itſelf; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the ſituation of Cuchullin, and the arrival of a ſcout who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is preſently made of Fingal, and of the expected aſſiſtance from the ſhips of the lonely iſle, in order to give further light to the ſubject. For the poet often ſhows his addreſs in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of Fingal, the previous expectations that are raiſed, and the extreme magnificence fully anſwering theſe expectations, with which the hero is at length preſented to us, are all worked up with ſuch ſkilful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the moſt refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been univerſally admired. Oſſian certainly ſhows no leſs art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpoſe than the whole management of the laſt battle, wherein Gaul the ſon of Morni, had beſought Fingal to retire, and to leave him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generoſity of the king in agreeing to this propoſal; the majeſty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his ſword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingneſs to deprive them of the glory of victory by coming in perſon to their aſſiſtance, firſt ſending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and at laſt, when the danger becomes more preſſing, his riſing in his might, and interpoſing, like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumſtances contriv-

ed with ſo much art as plainly diſcover the Celtic bards to have been not unpractiſed in heroic poetry.

The ſtory which is the foundation of the Iliad is in itſelf as ſimple as that of Fingal. A quarrel ariſes between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female ſlave; on which, Achilles, apprehending himſelf to be injured, withdraws his aſſiſtance from the reſt of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great diſtreſs, and beſeech him to be reconciled to them. He refuſes to fight for them in perſon, but ſends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being ſlain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The ſubject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuchullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for aſſiſtance to Fingal, who reigned in the oppoſite coaſt of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by raſh counſel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and deſponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for ſome time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once ſaved his life, makes him diſmiſs him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his ſtory with a much greater variety of particulars, than Oſſian; and in this has ſhown a compaſs of invention ſuperior to that of the other poet. But it muſt not be forgotten, that though Homer be more circumſtantial, his incidents, however, are leſs diverſified in kind than thoſe of Oſſian. War and bloodſhed reign throughout the Iliad: and notwithſtanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is ſo much uniformity in his ſubjects, that there are few readers, who before the cloſe, are not tired of perpetual fighting. Whereas in Oſſian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diverſity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroiſm, with love and friendſhip, of martial, with tender ſcenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The epiſodes too, have great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country: conſiſting of the ſongs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the

Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. Theſe ſongs are not introduced at random; if you except the epiſode of Duchomar and Morna, in the firſt book, which though beautiful, is more unartful than any of the reſt; they have always ſome particular relation to the actor who is intereſted, or to the events which are going on; and, whilſt they vary the ſcene, they preſerve a ſufficient connection with the main ſubject, by the fitneſs and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca, influences ſome circumſtances of the poem, particularly the honourable diſmiſſion of Swaran at the end; it was neceſſary that we ſhould be let into this part of the hero's ſtory. But as it lay without the compaſs of the preſent action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an epiſode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety, as if Ariſtotle himſelf had directed the plan, has contrived an epiſode, for this purpoſe, in the ſong of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The concluſion of the poem is ſtrictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleaſing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the conſolation of Cuchullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, ſoothe the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that paſſage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repoſe, which critics require as the proper termination of the epic work. "Thus they paſſed the "night in ſong, and brought back the morning with "joy. Fingal aroſe on the heath; and ſhook his glit-"tering ſpear in his hand. He moved firſt towards "the plains of Lena; and we followed like a ridge of "fire. Spread the ſail, ſaid the king of Morven, and "catch the winds that pour from Lena. We roſe on "the wave with ſongs; and ruſhed with joy through "the foam of the ocean." So much for the unity and general conduct of the epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the ſubject which Ariſtotle requires, that it ſhould be feigned not hiſtorical, he muſt not be underſtood ſo ſtrictly, as if he meant to exclude all ſubjects which have any foundation in

truth. For ſuch excluſion would both be unreaſonable in itſelf; and what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his Iliad on hiſtorical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Ariſtotle means no more than that it is the buſineſs of a poet not to be a mere annaliſt of facts, but to embelliſh truth with beautiful, probable, and uſeful fictions; to copy nature, as he himſelf explains it, like painters, who preſerve a likeneſs, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Oſſian has followed this courſe, and building upon true hiſtory, has ſufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be queſtioned by moſt readers. At the ſame time, the foundation which thoſe facts and characters had in truth, and the ſhare which the poet himſelf had in the tranſactions which he records, muſt be conſidered as no ſmall advantage to his work. For truth makes an impreſſion on the mind far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever ſo ſtrong, relates any events ſo feelingly as thoſe in which he has been intereſted; paints any ſcene ſo naturally as one which he has ſeen; or draws any characters in ſuch ſtrong colours as thoſe which he has perſonally known. It is conſidered as an advantage of the epic ſubject to be taken from a period ſo diſtant, as by being involved in the darkneſs of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Oſſian's ſubject may at firſt view appear unfavourable in this reſpect, as being taken from his own times, yet when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age; that he relates what had been tranſacted in another country at the diſtance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the ſtage; we ſhall find the objection in a great meaſure obviated. In ſo rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was looſe, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was

great and heroic in one generation, eaſily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural repreſentation of human characters in an epic poem is highly eſſential to its merit: And in reſpect of this there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Oſſian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at leaſt, if not ſuperior, to Virgil; and has indeed given all the diſplay of human nature which the ſimple occurrences of his times could be expected to furniſh. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly diſtinguiſhed, but ſometimes artfully contraſted, ſo as to illuſtrate each other. Oſſian's heroes are like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like thoſe of Homer's too, is of different kinds. For inſtance; the prudent, the ſedate, the modeſt and circumſpect Connal, is finely oppoſed to the preſumptuous, raſh, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuchullin into action by his temerity; and when he ſees the bad effect of his counſels, he will not ſurvive the diſgrace. Connal, like another Ulyſſes, attends Cuchullin to his retreat, counſels, and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-ſpirited Swaran is admirably contraſted with the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oſcar is a favourite one, throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuoſity in the day of action; his paſſion for fame; his ſubmiſſion to his father; his tenderneſs for Malvina; are the ſtrokes of a maſterly pencil; the ſtrokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Oſſian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, preſents to us through the whole work a moſt reſpectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleaſure. Cuchullin is a hero of the higheſt claſs; daring, magnanimous, and exquiſitely ſenſible to honour. We become attached to his

intereſt, and are deeply touched with his diſtreſs; and after the admiration raiſed for him in the firſt part of the poem, it is a ſtrong proof of Oſſian's maſterly genius that he durſt adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuchullin, ſhould be only an inferior perſonage; and who ſhould riſe as far above him, as Cuchullin riſes above the reſt.

Here, indeed, in the character and deſcription of Fingal, Oſſian triumphs almoſt unrivalled: For we may boldly defy all antiquity to ſhew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector poſſeſſes ſeveral great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a ſecondary perſonage in the Iliad, not the hero of the work. We ſee him only occaſionally; we know much leſs of him than we do of Fingal; who not only in this epic poem, but in Temora, and throughout the reſt of Oſſian's works, is preſented in all that variety of lights, which give the full diſplay of a character. And though Hector faithfully diſcharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the ſame ſavage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him inſulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the moſt cruel taunts, and telling him when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a ſhort time his body, ſtripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, ſhall be devoured by the vultures†. Whereas, in the character of Fingal, concur almoſt all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wiſdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildeſt look;" and diſtinguiſhed on every occaſion, by humanity and generoſity. He is merciful to his foes‖; full of affection to his children; full of concern about friends; and never mentions A-

† Iliad 16. 830. II. 17. 127.

‖ When he commands his ſons, after Swaran is taken priſoner, to "purſue the "reſt of Lochlin, over the heath of Lena; that no veſſel may hereafter bound on "the dark-rolling waves of Iniſtore;" he means not aſſuredly, as ſome have miſ-

gandecca, his firſt love, without the utmoſt tenderneſs. He is " the univerſal protector of the diſtreſſed;" " None ever went ſad from Fingal."——" O Oſcar! " bend the ſtrong in arms; but ſpare the feeble hand. " Be thou a ſtream of many tides againſt the foes of " thy people; but like the gale that moves the graſs, " to thoſe that aſk thine aid. So Trenmor lived; and " Trathal was; and ſuch has Fingal been. My arm " was the ſupport of the injured; the weak reſted be- " hind the lightning of my ſteel."—Theſe were the maxims of true heroiſm, to which he formed his grandſon. His fame is repreſented as every where ſpread; the greateſt heroes acknowledged his ſuperiority; his enemies tremble at his name; and the higheſt enconium that can be beſtowed on one whom the poet would moſt exalt, is to ſay, that his ſoul was like the ſoul of Fingal.

To do juſtice to the poet's merit, in ſupporting ſuch a character as this, I muſt obſerve, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in ſuch a manner, as to render it diſtinct and affecting to the mind. Some ſtrokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what uſually give us the moſt clear view, and the moſt ſenſible impreſſion of a character; becauſe they preſent to us a man, ſuch as we have ſeen; they recal known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and deſcribe a faultleſs hero, they, for the moſt part, ſet before us, a ſort of vague undiſtinguiſhable character, ſuch as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realize to itſelf, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an unanimated, inſipid perſonage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Oſſian, to our aſtoniſhment, has ſucceſsfully executed. His Fingal,

repreſented him, to order a general ſlaughter of the foes, and to prevent their ſaving themſelves by flight: but like a wiſe general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory complete, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future to fit out any fleet againſt him or his allies.

though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheleſs a real man; a character which touches and intereſts every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has repreſented him as an old man; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumſtances, peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more diſtinct light. He is ſurrounded with his family; he inſtructs his children in the principles of virtue; he is narrative of his paſt exploits; he is venerable with the gray locks of age; he is frequently diſpoſed to moralize, like an old man, on human vanity and the proſpect of death. There is more art, at leaſt more felicity, in this, than may at firſt be imagined. For youth and old age, are the two ſtates of human life, capable of being placed in the moſt pictureſque lights. Middle age is more general and vague; and has fewer circumſtances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a ſituation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be clothed with a variety of circumſtances, it always ſtands out more clear and full in poetical deſcription.

Beſides human perſonages, divine or ſupernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which moſt critics hold to be an eſſential part. The marvellous, it muſt be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for ſtriking and ſublime deſcription. No wonder, therefore that all poets ſhould have a ſtrong propenſity towards it. But I muſt obſerve, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjuſt properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet ſacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant ſupernatural ſcenes, he ſpreads over it an appearance of romance and childiſh fiction; he tranſports his readers from this world, into a phantaſtic, viſionary region; and loſes that weight and dignity which ſhould reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether baniſhed, can make a laſting or deep impreſſion. Human actions and man-

ners, are always the moſt intereſting objects which can be preſented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty which withdraws theſe too much from view, or obſcures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Beſides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have ſome foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what ſyſtem of the marvellous he pleaſes: He muſt avail himſelf either of the religious faith, or the ſuperſtitious credulity of the country wherein he lives; ſo as to give an air of probability to events which are moſt contrary to the common courſe of nature.

In theſe reſpects, Oſſian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the ſame courſe with Homer. For it is perfectly abſurd to imagine, as ſome critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in conſequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no ſuch refining genius. He found the traditionary ſtories on which he built his Iliad, mingled with popular legends, concerning the intervention of the gods; and he adopted theſe, becauſe they amuſed the fancy. Oſſian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghoſts and ſpirits: It is likely he believed them himſelf; and he introduced them, becauſe they gave his poems that ſolemn and marvellous caſt, which ſuited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; becauſe it was the only intervention of ſupernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; becauſe it did not interfere in the leaſt with the proper diſplay of human characters and actions; becauſe it had leſs of the incredible, than moſt other kinds of poetical machinery; and becauſe it ſerved to diverſify the ſcene, and to heighten the ſubject by an awful grandeur, which is the great deſign of machinery.

As Oſſian's mythology is peculiar to himſelf, and makes a conſiderable figure in his others poems, as well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make ſome obſervations on it, independent of its ſubſerviency to epic com-

poſition. It turns for the moſt part on the appearances of departed ſpirits. Theſe, conſonantly to the notions of every rude age, are repreſented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be viſible or inviſible at pleaſure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak; but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a ſeparate ſtate, they retain the ſame diſpoſitions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and purſue deer formed of clouds. The ghoſts of departed bards continue to ſing. The ghoſts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They reſt together in "their caves, and talk of mortal men. Their ſongs "are of other worlds. They come ſometimes to the "ear of reſt, and raiſe their feeble voice." All this preſents to us much the ſame ſet of ideas, concerning ſpirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the Odyſſey, where Ulyſſes viſits the regions of the dead: And in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, the ghoſt of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vaniſhes preciſely like one of Oſſian's, emitting a ſhrill, feeble cry, and melting away like ſmoke.

But though Homer's and Oſſian's ideas concerning ghoſts were of the ſame nature, we cannot but obſerve that Oſſian's ghoſts are drawn with much ſtronger and livelier colours than thoſe of Homer. Oſſian deſcribes ghoſts with all the particularity of one who had ſeen and converſed with them, and whoſe imagination was full of the impreſſion they had left upon it. He calls up thoſe awful and tremendous ideas which the

--------Simulacra modis pallentia miris,

are fitted to raiſe in the human mind; and which, in Shakeſpeare's ſtyle, "harrow up the ſoul." Crugal's ghoſt, in particular, in the beginning of the ſecond book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, deſcribed by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Moſt poets would have contented themſelves with telling us, that he reſembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dreſs was the ſame, only his face more pale and ſad; and that he bore the mark of the

wound by which he fell. But Oſſian ſets before our eyes a ſpirit from the inviſible world diſtinguiſhed by all thoſe features, which a ſtrong aſtoniſhed imagination would give to a ghoſt. "A dark red ſtream of fire "comes down from the hill. Crugal ſat upon the "beam; he that lately fell by the hand of Swaran, "ſtriving in the battle of heroes. His face is like the "beam of the ſetting moon. His robes are of the "clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two decaying "flames. Dark is the wound of his breaſt. The ſtars "dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was "like the ſound of a diſtant ſtream." The circumſtance of the ſtars being beheld, "dim-twinkling thro' "his form," is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the moſt lively impreſſion of his thin and ſhadowy ſubſtance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed, and the ſpeech put into his mouth are full of that ſolemn and awful ſublimity, which ſuits the ſubject. "Dim, and in tears, he ſtood and ſtretched his pale "hand over the hero. Faintly he raiſed his feeble "voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego. My ghoſt, "O Connal! is on my native hills; but my corſe is on "the ſands of Ullin. Thou ſhalt never talk with "Crugal, or find his lone ſteps in the heath. I am light "as the blaſt of Cromla; and I move like the ſhadow "of miſt. Connal, ſon of Colgar! I ſee the dark cloud "of death. It hovers over the plains of Lena. The "ſons of green Erin ſhall fall. Remove from the field "of ghoſts. Like the darkened moon he retired in the "midſt of the whiſtling blaſt."

Several other appearances of ſpirits might be pointed out as among the moſt ſublime paſſages of Oſſian's poetry. The circumſtances of them are conſiderably diverſified; and the ſcenery always ſuited to the occaſion. "Oſcar ſlowly aſcends the hill. The meteors of night "ſet on the heath before him. A diſtant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blaſts ruſh through aged oaks. "The half-enlightened moon ſinks dim and red behind "her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath.

" Oſcar drew his ſword." Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful ſcene that is to follow. " Trenmor came from his hill, at the voice of his " mighty ſon. A cloud, like the ſteed of the ſtranger, " ſupported his airy limbs. His robe is of the miſt of " Lano, that brings death to the people. His ſword " is a green meteor, half-extinguiſhed. His face is with- " out form, and dark. He ſighed thrice over the he- " ro: And thrice, the winds of the night roared a- " round. Many were his words to Oſcar. He ſlowly " vaniſhed, like a miſt that melts on the ſunny hill." To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble deſcription in the book of Job: " In " thoughts from the viſions of the night, when deep " ſleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me, and " trembling, which made all my bones to ſhake. Then " a ſpirit paſſed before my face. The hair of my fleſh " ſtood up. It ſtood ſtill; but I could not diſcern the " form thereof. An image was before mine eyes. " There was ſilence; and I heard a voice—Shall mor- " tal man be more juſt than God †?"

As Oſſian's ſupernatural beings are deſcribed with a ſurprizing force of imagination, ſo they are introduced with propriety. We have only three ghoſts in Fingal: That of Crugal, which comes to warn the hoſt of impending deſtruction, and to adviſe them to ſave themſelves by retreat; that of Everallin, the ſpouſe of Oſſian, which calls him to riſe and reſcue their ſon from danger; and that of Agandecca, which, juſt before the laſt engagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching deſtruction of her kinſmen and people In the other poems, ghoſts ſometimes appear when invoked to foretel futurity; frequently, according to the notions of theſe times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or death, to thoſe whom they viſit; ſometimes they inform their friends at a diſtance, of their own death; and ſometimes they

† Job iv. 13. 17.

are introduced to heighten the ſcenery on ſome great and ſolemn occaſion. "A hundred oaks burn to the "wind; and faint light gleams over the heath. The "ghoſts of Arilven paſs through the beam; and ſhew "their dim and diſtant forms. Comala is half-unſeen "on her meteor; and Hidallan is ſullen and dim." "The awful faces of other times, looked from the "clouds of Crona." "Fercuth! I ſaw the ghoſt of "night. Silent he ſtood on that bank; his robe of "miſt flew on the wind. I could behold his tears. "An aged man he ſeemed, and full of thought."

The ghoſts of ſtrangers mingle not with thoſe of the natives. "She is ſeen; but not like the daughters of "the hill. Her robes are from the ſtrangers land; and "ſhe is ſtill alone." When the ghoſt of one whom we had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is ſtill preſerved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghoſt, in the poem intituled, The Death of Cuchullin. He ſeems to forebode Cuchullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuchullin reproaches him for ſuppoſing that he could be intimidated by ſuch prognoſtics. "Why doſt "thou bend thy dark eyes on me, ghoſt of the car-"borne Calmar! Would'ſt thou frighten me, O Ma-"tha's ſon! from the battles of Cormac? Thy hand "was not feeble in war; neither was thy voice for "peace. How art thou changed, chief of Lara! If "now thou doſt adviſe to fly! Retire thou to thy cave: "Thou art not Calmar's ghoſt: He delighted in bat-"tle; and his arm was like the thunder of heaven." Calmar makes no return to this ſeeming reproach: But, "he retired in his blaſt with joy; for he had "heard the voice of his praiſe." This is preciſely the ghoſt of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithſtanding all the diſſatisfaction he expreſſes with his ſtate in the region of the dead, as ſoon as he had heard his ſon Neoptolemus praiſed for his gallant behaviour, ſtrode away with ſilent joy to rejoin the reſt of the ſhades*.

* Odyſſ. Lib. 11.

It is a great advantage of Oſſian's mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of moſt other ancient poets; which of courſe is apt to ſeem ridiculous, after the ſuperſtitions have paſſed away on which it was founded. Oſſian's mythology is, to ſpeak ſo, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed ſpirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amuſing; but far from being always ſupported with proper dignity. The indecent ſquabbles among his gods, ſurely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Oſſian's machinery has dignity upon all occaſions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper: becauſe coincident with the ſtrain and ſpirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unſuitable to the ſubjects on which Oſſian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always ſolemn, it is not, however, always dreary or diſmal; it is enlivened, as much as the ſubject would permit, by thoſe pleaſant and beautiful appearances, which he ſometimes introduces, of the ſpirits of the hill. Theſe are gentle ſpirits; deſcending on ſun-beams; fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices ſweet; and their viſits to men propitious. The greateſt praiſe that can be given, to the beauty of a living woman, is to ſay, "She is fair as the ghoſt of the "hill; when it moves in a ſun-beam at noon, over the "ſilence of Morven."—"The hunter ſhall hear my "voice from his booth. He ſhall fear, but love my "voice. For ſweet ſhall my voice be for my friends; "for pleaſant were they to me."

Beſides ghoſts, or the ſpirits of departed men, we find in Oſſian ſome inſtances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a ſuperior nature to ghoſts are ſometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and ſtorms, and to pour them on the land of the ſtranger; to overturn foreſts, and to ſend

death among the people. We have prodigies too; a ſhower of blood; and when ſome diſaſter is befalling at a diſtance, the ſound of death heard on the ſtrings of Oſſian's harp: all perfectly conſonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a ſuperſtitious imagination in all countries. The deſcription of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the aſcent of Malvina into it, deſerves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear tranſcribing the paſſage, as it muſt have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Oſſian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, oppoſed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian god; the appearance and the ſpeech of that awful ſpirit; the wound which he receives, and the ſhriek which he ſends forth, "as rolled into himſelf, "he roſe upon the wind;" are full of the moſt amazing and terrible majeſty. I know no paſſage more ſublime in the writings of any uninſpired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandize the hero; which it does to a high degree; nor is it ſo unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at firſt be thought. According to the notions of thoſe times, ſupernatural beings were material, and conſequently vulnerable. The ſpirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worſhip at the ſtone of his power; he plainly conſidered him as the god of his enemies only; as a local deity, whoſe dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worſhipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his ſubmiſſion. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority, for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle, the gods whom that chief himſelf worſhipped, Oſſian ſurely is pardonable for making his hero ſuperior to the god of a foreign territory*.

* The ſcene of this encounter of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda is laid in Ini-

Notwithſtanding the poetical advantages which I have aſcribed to Oſſian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the author diſcovered ſome knowledge of a ſupreme Being. Although his ſilence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious tranſlator in a very probable manner, yet ſtill it muſt be held a conſiderable diſadvantage to the poetry. For the moſt auguſt and lofty ideas that can embelliſh poetry are derived from the belief of a divine adminiſtration of the univerſe: And hence the invocation of a ſupreme Being, or at leaſt of ſome ſuperior powers who are conceived as preſiding over human affairs, the ſolemnities of religious worſhip, prayers preferred, and aſſiſtance implored on critical occaſions, appear with great dignity in the works of almoſt all poets as chief ornaments of their compoſitions. The abſence of all ſuch religious ideas from Oſſian's poetry, is a ſenſible blank in it: the more to be regretted, as we can eaſily imagine what an illuſtrious figure they would have made under the management of ſuch a genius as his; and how finely they would have been adapted to many ſituations which occur in his works.

After ſo particular an examination of Fingal, it were needleſs to enter into as full a diſcuſſion of the conduct of Temora, the other epic poem. Many of the ſame obſervations, eſpecially with regard to the great characteriſtics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high

ſtore, or the iſlands of Orkney; and in the deſcription of Fingal's landing there, it is ſaid, "A rock bends along the coaſt with all its echoing wood." On "the top "is the circle of Loda, with the moſſy ſtone of power." In confirmation of Oſſian's topography, it is proper to acquaint the reader, that in theſe iſlands, as I have been well informed, there are many pillars, and circles of ſtones, ſtill remaining, known by the name of the ſtones and circles of Loda, or Loden; to which ſome degree of ſuperſtitious regard is annexed to this day. Theſe iſlands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Daniſh dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet ſome remains among the natives, is called the Norſe; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the ſuperſtitions of the inhabitants, are quite diſtinct from thoſe of the Highlands and weſtern iſles of Scotland. Their ancient ſongs too, are of a different ſtrain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations from the dead, which were the favourite ſubjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them of wars in former times with the inhabitants of the weſtern iſlands.

merit, however, of Temora, requires that we ſhould not paſs it by without ſome remarks.

The ſcene of Temora, as of Fingal, is laid in Ireland; and the action is of a poſterior date. The ſubject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and puniſh a bloody uſurper, and to reſtore the poſſeſſion of the kingdom to the poſterity of the lawful prince; an undertaking worthy of the juſtice and heroiſm of the great Fingal. The action is one, and complete. The poem opems with the deſcent of Fingal on the coaſt, and the conſultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince Cormac, which was the cauſe of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an epiſode in the firſt book. In the progreſs of the poem, three battles are deſcribed, which riſe in their importance above one another; the ſucceſs is various, and the iſſue for ſome time doubtful; till at laſt, Fingal brought into diſtreſs, by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his ſon Fillan, aſſumes the command himſelf, and having ſlain the Iriſh king in ſingle combat, reſtores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has, perhaps, leſs fire than the other epic poem; but in return it has more variety, more tenderneſs, and more magnificence. The reigning idea ſo often preſented to us of "Fingal in the laſt of his fields," is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble concluſion be thought of, than the aged hero, after ſo many ſucceſsful atchievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the ſolemnities of thoſe times, reſigning his ſpear to his ſon. The events are leſs crowded in Temora than in Fingal; actions and characters are more particularly diſplayed; we are let into the tranſactions of both hoſts; and informed of the adventures of the night as well as of the day. The ſtill pathetic and the romantic ſcenery of ſeveral of the night adventures, ſo remarkably ſuited to Oſſian's genius, occaſion a fine diverſity in the poem; and are happily contraſted with the military operations of the day.

In moſt of our author's poems, the horrors of war are ſoftened by intermixed ſcenes of love and friendſhip. In Fingal, theſe are introduced as epiſodes; in Temora, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sul-malla. This forms one of the moſt conſpicuous beauties of that poem. The diſtreſs of Sulmalla, diſguiſed and unknown among ſtrangers, her tender and anxious concern for the ſafety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he firſt diſcovers her, his ſtruggles to conceal and ſuppreſs his paſſion, leſt it ſhould unman him in the midſt of war, though "his ſoul poured forth in ſecret, when he be-"held her fearful eye;" and the laſt interview between them, when overcome by her tenderneſs, he lets her know he had diſcovered her, and confeſſes his paſſion; are all wrought up with the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility and delicacy.

Beſides the characters which appeared in Fingal, ſeveral new ones are here introduced: and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheleſs diverſified in a ſenſible and ſtriking manner. Foldath, for inſtance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a ſavage chieftain: Bold, and daring, but preſumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is diſtinguiſhed, on his firſt appearance, as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar; "His ſtride is haughty; his red eye "rolls in wrath." In his perſon and whole deportment, he is contraſted with the mild and wiſe Hidalla, another leader of the ſame army, on whoſe humanity and gentleneſs he looks with great contempt. He profeſſedly delights in ſtrife and blood. He inſults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counſels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his ſchemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral ſong to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghoſts, was in thoſe days con-

ſidered as the greateſt barbarity. Fierce to the laſt, he comforts himſelf in his dying moments with thinking that his ghoſt ſhall often leave its blaſt to rejoice over the graves of thoſe he had ſlain. Yet Oſſian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, ſome tender circumſtances; by the moving deſcription of his daughter Dardu-lena, the laſt of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is diſtinguiſhed by the moſt humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hoſpitality to ſtrangers; open to every generous ſentiment, and to every ſoft and compaſſionate feeling. He is ſo amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it ſo, as to make Cathmor himſelf indirectly acknowledge Fingal's ſuperiority, and to appear ſomewhat apprehenſive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Oſſian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes, Cuchullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, ſenſibly diſtinguiſhed each of their characters. Cuchullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wiſe and great, retaining an aſcendant peculiar to himſelf in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in Temora, and the one moſt highly finiſhed, is Fillan. His character is of that ſort, for which Oſſian ſhews a particular fondneſs; an eager, fervent young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthuſiaſm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had ſketched this in the deſcription of his own ſon Oſcar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is ſo conſonant to the epic ſtrain, though, ſo far as I remember, not placed in ſuch a conſpicuous light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Oſſian's management of it in this inſtance.

Fillan was the youngeſt of all the ſons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oſcar, by whoſe fame and great deeds in war we may naturally ſuppoſe his ambition to have been highly ſtimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is deſcribed as more raſh and fiery. His firſt appearance is ſoon after Oſcar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a converſation with his brother Oſſian, on that occaſion, we learn that it was not long ſince he began to lift the ſpear. "Few are the marks "of my ſword in battle; but my ſoul is fire." He is with ſome difficulty reſtrained by Oſſian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of ſignalizing his valour. "The king hath not remarked my "ſword; I go forth with the crowd; I return with-"out my fame." Soon after, when Fingal, according to cuſtom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was ſtanding forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is preſented in the following moſt pictureſque and natural attitude. "On his ſpear ſtood the ſon of Clatho, in the wander-"ing of his locks. Thrice he raiſed his eyes to Fin-"gal; his voice thrice failed him as he ſpoke. Fillan "could not boaſt of battles; at once he ſtrode away. "Bent over a diſtant ſtream he ſtood; the tear hung "in his eye. He ſtruck, at times, the thiſtle's head "with his inverted ſpear." No leſs natural and beautiful is the deſcription of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occaſion. "Nor is he unſeen of Fingal. "Side-long he beheld his ſon. He beheld him with "burſting joy. He hid the big tear with his locks, "and turned amidſt his crowded ſoul." The command, for that day, being given to Gaul, Fillan ruſhes amidſt the thickeſt of the foe, ſaves Gaul's life, who is wounded by a random arrow, and diſtinguiſhes himſelf ſo in battle, that "the days of old return on Fin-"gal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his ſon. "As the ſun rejoices from the cloud, over the tree his

" beams have raiſed, whilſt it ſhakes its lonely head on " the heath, ſo joyful is the king over Fillan." Sedate, however, and wiſe, he mixes the praiſe which he beſtows on him with ſome reprehenſion of his raſhneſs, " My ſon, I ſaw thy deeds, and my ſoul was glad. " Thou art brave, ſon of Clatho but headlong in the " ſtrife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never " feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind thee; " they are thy ſtrength in the field. Then ſhalt thou " be long renowned, and behold the tombs of thy fa- " thers."

On the next day, the greateſt and the laſt of Fillan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the hoſt to battle. Fingal's ſpeech to his troops on this occaſion is full of noble ſentiment; and where he recommends his ſon to their care, extremely touching. " A young beam is before you; few are his ſteps to " war. They are few, but he is valiant; defend my " dark-haired ſon. Bring him back with joy; here- " after he may ſtand alone. His form is like his fa- " thers; his ſoul is a flame of their fire." When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his ſtrength to deſcribe the exploits of the young hero; who, at laſt encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath, the oppoſite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Oſſian, if any where, excels himſelf. Foldath being ſlain, and a general rout begun, there was no reſource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himſelf, who in this extremity deſcends from the hill, where, according to the cuſtom of thoſe princes, he ſurveyed the battle. Obſerve how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. " Wide ſpreading over echoing Lubar, the " flight of Bolga is rolled along Fillan hung for- " ward on their ſteps; and ſtrewed the heath with " dead. Fingal rejoiced over his ſon. Blue-ſhielded " Cathmor roſe. Son of Alpin, bring the harp! Give " Fillan's praiſe to the wind; raiſe high his praiſe in " my hall, while yet he ſhines in war. Leave, blue-

" eyed Clatho! leave thy hall! behold that early " beam of thine! The hoſt is withered in its courſe. " No farther look—it is dark—light-trembling from " the harp, ſtrike, virgins! ſtrike the ſound." The ſudden interruption, and ſuſpenſe of the narration on Cathmor's riſing from his hill, the abrupt burſting into the praiſe of Fillan, and the paſſionate apoſtrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to intereſt us in Fillan's danger; and the whole is heightened by the immediately following ſimile, one of the moſt magnificent and ſublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent ſubject of admiration to critics; " Fillan is like a ſpirit of " heaven, that deſcends from the ſkirt of his blaſt. " The troubled ocean feels his ſteps, as he ſtrides from " wave to wave. His path kindles behind him; " iſlands ſhake their heads on the heaving ſeas."

But the poet's art is not yet exhauſted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or in Oſſian's ſtyle, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too intereſting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the riſing of Cathmor, and the danger of his ſon. But what ſhall he do? " Shall Fingal riſe to his aid, and " take the ſword of Luno? What then ſhould become " of thy fame, ſon of white-boſomed Clatho? Turn " not thine eyes from Fingal, daughter of Iniſtore! I " ſhall not quench thy early beam. No cloud of " mine ſhall riſe, my ſon, upon thy ſoul of fire." Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the ſafety of his ſon, he withdraws from the ſight of the engagement; and diſpatches Oſſian in haſte to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction. " Father of Oſcar!" addreſſing him by a title which on this occaſion has the higheſt propriety, " Father of " Oſcar! lift the ſpear; defend the young in arms. " But conceal thy ſteps from Fillan's eyes· He muſt " not know that I doubt his ſteel." Oſſian arrived

too late. But unwilling to deſcribe Fillan vanquiſhed, the poet ſuppreſſes all the circumſtances of the combat with Cathmor; and only ſhews us the dying hero. We ſee him animated to the end with the ſame martial and ardent ſpirit; breathing his laſt in bitter regret for being ſo early cut off from the field of glory. "Oſſian, "lay me in that hollow rock. Raiſe no ſtone above "me; leſt one ſhould aſk about my fame. I am fal-"len in the firſt of my fields; fallen without renown. "Let thy voice alone, ſend joy to my flying ſoul. Why "ſhould the bard know where dwells the early-fallen "Fillan?" He who after tracing the circumſtances of this ſtory, ſhall deny that our bard is poſſeſſed of high ſentiment and high art, muſt be ſtrangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the ſtory of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a ſimilar kind; and after all the praiſe he may juſtly beſtow on the elegant and finiſhed deſcription of that amiable author, let him ſay, which of the two poets unfold moſt of the human ſoul. I wave inſiſting on any more of the particulars in Temora; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and ſpirit of Oſſian's poetry, than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art diſcovered in conducting works of ſuch length as Fingal and Temora, diſtinguiſh them from the other poems in this collection. The ſmaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no leſs eminent. They are hiſtorical poems, generally of the elegiac kind; and plainly diſcover themſelves to be the work of the ſame author. One conſiſtent face of manners is every where preſented to us; one ſpirit of poetry reigns; the maſterly hand of Oſſian appears throughout; the ſame rapid and animated ſtyle; the ſame ſtrong colouring of imagination, and the ſame glowing ſenſibility of heart. Beſides the unity which belongs to the compoſitions of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of ſubject which very happily connects all theſe poems. They form the poetical hiſtory of the age of Fingal. The ſame race of heroes, whom we had met with in the greater poems, Cuchullin, Oſcar, Con-

nal, and Gaul, return again upon the ſtage; and Fingal himſelf is always the principal figure, preſented on every occaſion, with equal magnificence, nay, riſing upon us to the laſt. The circumſtances of Oſſian's old age and blindneſs, his ſurviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the ſpouſe or miſtreſs of his beloved ſon Oſcar, furniſh the fineſt poetical ſituations that fancy could deviſe for that tender pathetic which reigns in Oſſian's poetry.

On each of theſe poems, there might be room for ſeparate obſervations, with regard to the conduct and diſpoſition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the deſcriptions and ſentiments. Carthon is a regular and highly finiſhed piece. The main ſtory is very properly introduced by Cleſſammor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's ſong of mourning over Moina; in which Oſſian ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to diſtinguiſh him, for being an eminent poet, as well as warrior. Fingal's ſong upon this occaſion, when "his thouſand bards leaned forwards from "their ſeats, to hear the voice of the king," is inferior to no paſſage in the whole book: and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the ſerioufneſs, no leſs than the ſublimity of the ſtrain, is peculiarly ſuited to the hero's character. In Darthula, are aſſembled almoſt all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendſhip, love, the affections of parents, ſons, and brothers, the diſtreſs of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful addreſs to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the tranſition from thence to the ſubject, moſt happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The ſtory is regular, dramatic, intereſting to the laſt. He who can read it without emotion, may congratulate himſelf, if he pleaſes, upon being completely armed againſt ſympathetic ſorrow. As Fingal had no occaſion of appearing in the action of this poem, Oſſian makes a very artful tranſition from his narration, to what was paſſing in the halls of Selma. The ſound heard there

on the ſtrings of his harp, the concern which Fingal ſhows on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghoſts of their fathers, to receive the heroes falling in a diſtant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination, to increaſe the ſolemnity, and to diverſify the ſcenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the moſt ſublime dignity; and has this advantage of being more cheerful in the ſubject, and more happy in the cataſtrophe than moſt of the other poems: Though tempered at the ſame time with epiſodes in that ſtrain of tender melancholy, which ſeems to have been the great delight of Oſſian and the bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed by high generoſity of ſentiment. This is carried ſo far, particularly in the refuſal of Gaul, on one ſide, to take the advantage of a ſleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recal into one's mind the manners of chivalry; ſome reſemblance to which may perhaps be ſuggeſted by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took riſe in an age and country too remote from thoſe of Oſſian to admit the ſuſpicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real exiſtence, the ſame military enthuſiaſm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Oſſian, that is, in the infancy of a riſing ſtate, through the operation of the ſame cauſe, very naturally produce effects of the ſame kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal ſyſtem exiſting only in romance, it will not be thought ſurpriſing, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners ſhould be found among them, as much, at leaſt, as among the *Trobadores*, or ſtrolling Provençal bards, in the 10th or 11th century; whoſe ſongs, it is ſaid, firſt gave riſe to thoſe romantic ideas of heroiſm, which for ſo long a time inchanted Europe †. Oſſian's heroes have all the gallantry and

† Vid. Huetius de origine fabularum Romanenſium.

generoſity of thoſe fabulous knights without their extravagance; and his love ſcenes have native tenderneſs, without any mixture of thoſe forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which reſemble the moſt thoſe of romance, concern women who follow their lovers to war diſguiſed in the armour of men; and theſe are ſo managed as to produce, in the diſcovery, ſeveral of the moſt intereſting ſituations: one beautiful inſtance of which may be ſeen in Carric-thura, and another in Calthon and Colmal.

Oithona preſents a ſituation of a different nature. In the abſence of her lover Gaul, ſhe had been carried off and raviſhed by Dunrommath. Gaul diſcovers the place where ſhe is kept concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the ſentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occaſion, are deſcribed with ſuch tender and exquiſite propriety, as does the greateſt honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author: and would have been admired in any poet of the moſt refined age. The conduct of Croma muſt ſtrike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the ſucceeding poem. She is therefore introduced in perſon; "ſhe has heard a voice in a dream; "ſhe feels the fluttering of her ſoul;" and in a moſt moving lamentation addreſſed to her beloved Oſcar, ſhe ſings her own death ſong. Nothing could be calculated with more art to ſoothe and comfort her, than the ſtory which Oſſian relates. In the young and brave Fovar-gormo, another Oſcar is introduced; his praiſes are ſung; and the happineſs is ſet before her of thoſe who die in their youth, "when their renown is around "them; before the feeble behold them in the hall, "and ſmile at their trembling hands."

But no where does Oſſian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the concluſion of his ſongs, "The laſt ſound of the Voice "of Cona."

Qualis olor noto poſiturus littore vitam,
Ingemit, et mœſtis mulcens conſentibus auras
Praeſago quaeritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably ſuited to the ſubject. Every thing is full of that inviſible world, into which the aged bard believes himſelf now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal preſents itſelf to his view; "he ſees the cloud that ſhall receive his ghoſt; "he beholds the miſt that ſhall form his robe when he "appears on his hill;" and all the natural objects around him ſeem to carry the preſages of death. "The thiſtle "ſhakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its "heavy head—it ſeems to ſay, I am covered with the "drops of heaven; the time of my departure is near, "and the blaſt that ſhall ſcatter my leaves." Malvina's death is hinted to him in the moſt delicate manner by the ſon of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheoſis, or aſcent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the ſtory which follows from the mention which Oſſian ſuppoſes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. "And doſt thou remember Oſſian, O "Toſcar, ſon of Conloch? The battles of our youth "were many; our ſwords went together to the field." Nothing could be more proper than to end his ſongs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now ſo full; and who, from firſt to laſt, had been ſuch a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The ſcene of moſt of Oſſian's poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coaſt of Ireland oppoſite to the territories of Fingal. When the ſcene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from thoſe of Oſſian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, cuſtoms, and religion of both nations were the ſame. They had been ſeparated from one another by migration, only a few generations, as it ſhould ſeem, before our poet's age; and they ſtill maintained a cloſe and frequent intercourſe.

But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coaſt, or to the iſlands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sul-malla of Lumon, and Cath-loda, the caſe is quite altered. Thoſe countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic deſcent, who in their manners and religious rites differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Oſſian. His deſcriptions bear the native marks of one who was preſent in the expeditions which he relates, and who deſcribes what he had ſeen with his own eyes. No ſooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the iſlands of Iniſtore, than we perceive that we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the ſtones and circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and inchantments, for which it is well known thoſe northern nations were early famous. "There mixed with the murmur of waters, roſe the "voice of aged men, who called the forms of night to "aid them in their war;" whilſt the Caledonian chiefs who aſſiſted them, are deſcribed as ſtanding at a diſtance, heedleſs of their rites. That ferocity of manners which diſtinguiſhed thoſe nations, alſo becomes conſpicuous. In the combats of their chiefs there is a peculiar ſavageneſs; even their women are bloody and fierce. The ſpirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern ſcalder, whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again. "The hawks," Oſſian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs ſay, "ruſh from all their winds: they "are wont to trace my courſe. We rejoiced three days "above the dead, and called the hawks of heaven. "They came from all their winds, to feaſt on the foes "of Annir."

Diſmiſſing now the ſeparate conſideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make ſome obſervations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Deſcription, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always diſtinguiſhed by

his talent for deſcription ‡. A ſecond rate writer diſcerns nothing new or peculiar in the object he means to deſcribe His conceptions of it are vague and looſe; his expreſſions feeble; and of courſe the object is preſented to us indiſtinctly and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we ſee it before our eyes: he catches the diſtinguiſhing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in ſuch a light, that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which firſt receives a ſtrong impreſſion of the object; and then, by a proper ſelection of capital pictureſque circumſtances employed in deſcribing it, tranſmits that impreſſion in its full force to the imaginations of others. That Oſſian poſſeſſes this deſcriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his deſcriptions produce upon the imaginations of thoſe who read him with any degree of attention and taſte. Few poets are more intereſting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country, become familiar; we even think we could draw the figure of his ghoſts: In a word, whilſt reading him we are tranſported as into a new region, and dwelling among his objects as if they were all real.

It were eaſy to point out ſeveral inſtances of exquiſite painting in the works of our author. Such, for inſtance, as the ſcenery with which Temora opens, and the attitude in which Cairbar is there preſented to us; the deſcription of the young prince Cormac, in the ſame book; and the ruins of Balclutha in Carthon. "I have "ſeen the walls of Balclutha, but they were deſolate. "The fire had reſounded in the halls; and the voice "of the people is heard no more. The ſtream of Clu-"tha was removed from its place by the fall of the walls. "The thiſtle ſhook there its lonely head: The moſs "whiſtled to the wind. The fox looked out from the

‡ See the rules of poetical deſcription excellently illuſtrated by Lord Kaimes, in his Elements of Criticiſm, vol. iii. chap. 21. Of Narration and Deſcription.

" windows; the rank graſs of the wall waved round his " head. Deſolate is the dwelling of Moina; and ſi- " lence is in the houſe of her fathers." Nothing alſo can be more natural and lively than the manner in which Carthon afterwards deſcribes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child: " Have I not ſeen " the fallen Balclutha? And ſhall I feaſt with Comhal's " ſon? Comhal! who threw his fire in the midſt " of my father's hall! I was young, and knew not the " cauſe why the virgins wept. The columns of ſmoke " pleaſed mine eye, when they roſe above my walls: I " often looked back with gladneſs, when my friends " fled above the hill. But when the years of my youth " came on, I beheld the moſs of my fallen walls. My " ſigh aroſe with the morning; and my tears deſcend- " ed with night. Shall I not fight, I ſaid to my ſoul, " againſt the children of my foes? and I will fight, O " bard! I feel the ſtrength of my ſoul." In the ſame poem the aſſembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of ſome impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is deſcribed with ſo many picturesque circumſtances, that one imagines himſelf preſent in the aſſembly. " The king alone beheld the terrible ſight, " and he foreſaw the death of his people. He came in " ſilence to his hall and took his father's ſpear; the " mail rattled on his breaſt. The heroes roſe around. " They looked in ſilence on each other, marking the " eyes of Fingal. They ſaw the battle in his face. A " thouſand ſhields are placed at once on their arms; " and they drew a thouſand ſwords. The hall of Sel- " ma brightened around. The clang of arms aſcends. " The gray dogs howl in their place. No word is a- " mong the mighty chiefs. Each marked the eyes of " the king; and half-aſſumed his ſpear."

It has been objected to Oſſian, that his deſcriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much leſs diverſified by circumſtances than thoſe of Homer. This is in ſome meaſure true. The amazing fertility of Homer's invention is no where ſo much diſplayed as in the inci-

dents of his battles, and in the little hiſtory pieces he gives of the perſons ſlain. Nor indeed with regard to the talent of deſcription, can too much be ſaid in praiſe of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are thoſe of nature. But Oſſian's genius was of a different kind from Homer's. It led him to hurry towards grand objects rather than to amuſe himſelf with particulars of leſs importance. He could dwell on the death of a favourite hero: but that of a private man ſeldom ſtopped his rapid courſe. Homer's genius was more comprehenſive than Oſſian's. It included a wider circle of objects; and could work up any incident into deſcription. Oſſian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itſelf was the higheſt of all, the region of the pathetic and ſublime.

We muſt not imagine, however, that Oſſian's battles conſiſt only of general indiſtinct deſcription. Such beautiful incidents are ſometimes introduced, and the circumſtances of the perſons ſlain ſo much diverſified, as ſhow that he could have embelliſhed his military ſcenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. One man is "ſtretched in the duſt of his native land, he fell, "where often he had ſpread the feaſt, and often raiſed "the voice of the harp." The maid of Iniſtore is introduced, in a moving apoſtrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, "as rolled in the duſt he lifted his faint "eyes to the king," is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is ſlain by night, is heard "hiſſing on the half-extinguiſhed oak," which had been kindled for giving light: Another climbing a tree to eſcape from his foe, is pierced by his ſpear from behind; "ſhrieking, panting he fell; whilſt moſs and "withered branches purſue his fall, and ſtrew the blue "arms of Gaul." Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: "I ſaw Gaul in his armour, and my ſoul was mixed

" with his: For the fire of the battle was in his eyes;
" he looked to the foe with joy. We ſpoke the words
" of friendſhip in ſecret; and the lightning of our
" ſwords poured together. We drew them behind
" the wood, and tried the ſtrength of our arms on
" the empty air."

Oſſian is always conciſe in his deſcriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great miſtake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended ſtyle, is of advantage to deſcription. On the contrary, ſuch a diffuſe manner for the moſt part weakens it. Any one redundant circumſtance is a nuiſance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indiſtinct. " Obſtat," as Quintilian ſays with regard to ſtyle, " quicquid non ad-
" juvat." To be conciſe in deſcription, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No deſcription that reſts in generals can poſſibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a diſtinct conception. But at the ſame time, no ſtrong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a maſs of trivial ones. By the happy choice of ſome one, or of a few that are the moſt ſtriking, it preſents the image more complete, ſhows us more at one glance, than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all proſe writers the moſt conciſe. He has even a degree of abruptneſs reſembling our author: Yet no writer is more eminent for lively deſcription. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, propoſes to diſmiſs him with honour: " Raiſe to-morrow thy white ſails to
" the wind, thou brother of Agandecca!" he conveys, by thus addreſſing his enemy, a ſtronger impreſſion of the emotions then paſſing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been ſpent in deſcribing the conflict between reſentment againſt Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the moſt full idea of a hardy

veteran, after the few following words: "His ſhield "is marked with the ſtrokes of battle; his red eye de- "ſpiſes danger" When, Oſcar, left alone, was ſurrounded by foes, "he ſtood," it is ſaid, "growing in "his place, like the flood of the narrow vale;" a happy repreſentation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midſt of danger, ſeems to increaſe in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the ſudden riſing of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And the whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumſtances of domeſtic ſorrow occaſioned by a young warrior's firſt going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by theſe words: "Calmar leaned on his father's "ſpear; that ſpear which he brought from Lara's hall, "when the ſoul of his mother was ſad."

The conciſeneſs of Oſſian's deſcriptions is the more proper on account of his ſubjects. Deſcriptions of gay and ſmiling ſcenes may, without any diſadvantage, be amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in theſe. The deſcription may be weakened by being diffuſe, yet notwithſtanding, may be beautiful ſtill. Whereas, with reſpect to grand, ſolemn, and pathetic ſubjects, which are Oſſian's chief field, the caſe is very different. In theſe, energy is above all things required. The imagination muſt be ſeized at once, or not at all; and is far more deeply impreſſed by one ſtrong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteneſs of laboured illuſtration.

But Oſſian's genius, though chiefly turned towards the ſublime and pathetic, was not confined to it: In ſubjects alſo of grace and delicacy, he diſcovers the hand of a maſter. Take for an example the following elegant deſcription of Agandecca, wherein the tenderneſs of Tibullus ſeems united with the majeſty of Virgil. "The daughter of ſnow overheard, and left "the hall of her ſecret ſigh. She came in all her "beauty; like the moon from the cloud of the eaſt. "Lovelineſs was around her as light. Her ſteps were "like the muſic of ſongs. She ſaw the youth and lov-

"ed him. He was the ſtolen ſigh of her ſoul. Her "blue eyes rolled on him in ſecret: And ſhe bleſt the "chief of Morven." Several other inſtances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendſhip painted by our author with a moſt natural and happy delicacy.

The ſimplicity of Oſſian's manner adds great beauty to his deſcriptions, and indeed to his whole poetry. We meet with no affected ornaments; no forced refinement, no marks either in ſtyle or thought of a ſtudied endeavour to ſhine and ſparkle. Oſſian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings; and to ſpeak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one inſtance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his works. It is in the firſt book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of two lovers, two lonely yews are mentioned to have ſprung, "whoſe "branches wiſhed to meet on high." This ſympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit; and it is ſomewhat curious to find this ſingle inſtance of that ſort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The "joy of grief," is one of Oſſian's remarkable expreſſions, ſeveral times repeated. If any one ſhall think that it needs to be juſtified by a precedent, he may find it twice uſed by Homer; in the Iliad, when Achilles is viſited by the ghoſt of Patroclus; and in the Odyſſey, when Ulyſſes meets his mother in the ſhades. On both theſe occaſions, the heroes melted with tenderneſs, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghoſt, "that we "might," ſay they, "in a mutual embrace, enjoy the "delight of grief."

—Κρυεροῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο†.

But in truth the expreſſion ſtands in need of no defence from authority; for it is a natural and juſt expreſſion; and conveys a clear idea of that gratificatior

† Odyſſ. 11. 211. Iliad xxiii. 98.

which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Offian makes a very proper diſtinction between this gratification, and the deſtructive effect of overpowering grief. "There is a joy in grief, "when peace dwells in the breaſts of the ſad. But ſor-"row waſtes the mournful, O daughter of Toſcar, and "their days are few." To "give the joy of grief," generally ſignifies to raiſe the ſtrain of ſoft and grave muſic; and finely characterizes the taſte of Offian's age and country. In thoſe days, when the ſongs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muſe was held in chief honour; gallant actions, and virtuous ſufferings, were the choſen theme; preferable to that light and trifling ſtrain of poetry and muſic, which promotes light and trifling manners, and ſerves to emaſculate the mind. "Strike the harp in my hall," ſaid the great Fingal, in the midſt of youth and victory, "Strike "the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the ſong. "Pleaſant is the joy of grief! It is like the ſhower of "ſpring, when it ſoftens the branch of the oak; and "the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O "bards! To-morrow we lift the ſail †."

Perſonal epithets have been much uſed by all the poets of the moſt ancient ages: and when well choſen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the ſtyle deſcriptive and animated. Beſides epithets founded on bodily diſtinctions, akin to many of Homer's we find in Offian ſeveral which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oſcar of the future fights, Fingal of the mildeſt look, Carril of other times, the mildly bluſhing Everallin; Bragela, the lonely ſun-beam of Dunſcaich: a Culdee, the ſon of the ſecret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in deſcriptive poetry, compariſons or ſimilies are the moſt ſplendid. Theſe chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem: And as they abound ſo much in the works of

† Cariothura

Oſſian, and are commonly among the favourite paſſages of all poets, it may be expected that I ſhould be ſomewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical ſimile always ſuppoſes two objects brought together, between which there is ſome near relation or connection in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be preciſely defined. For various, almoſt numberleſs, are the analogies formed among objects, by a ſprightly imagination. The relation of actual ſimilitude, or likeneſs of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical compariſon. Sometimes a reſemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: Sometimes, a reſemblance in one diſtinguiſhing property or circumſtance. Very often two objects are brought together in a ſimile, though they reſemble one another, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in nothing, only becauſe they raiſe in the mind a train of ſimilar, and what may be called concordant ideas; ſo that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, ſerves to quicken and heighten the impreſſion made by the other. Thus, to give an inſtance from our poet, the pleaſure with which an old man looks back on the exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct reſemblance to the beauty of a fine evening; farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Oſſian has founded upon this, one of the moſt beautiful compariſons that is to be met with in any poet. "Wilt "thou not liſten ſon of the rock, to the ſong of Oſſian? "My ſoul is full of other times; the joy of my youth "returns. Thus, the ſun appears in the weſt, after "the ſteps of his brightneſs have moved behind a ſtorm. "The green hills lift their dewy heads. The blue "ſtreams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero comes "forth on his ſtaff; and his gray hair glitters in the "beam." Never was there a finer group of objects. It raiſes a ſtrong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by diſplaying a ſcene, which produces in every ſpectator, a correſponding train of pleaſing emotions; the declining ſun looking forth in his brightneſs

after a ſtorm; the cheerful face of all nature; and the ſtill life finely animated by the circumſtance of the aged hero, with his ſtaff and his gray locks; a circumſtance both extremely pictureſque in itſelf, and peculiarly ſuited to the main object of the compariſon. Such analogies and aſſociations of ideas as theſe, are highly pleaſing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diverſify the ſcene; they aggrandize the ſubject; they keep the imagination awake and ſprightly. For as the judgment is principally exerciſed in diſtinguiſhing objects, and remarking the differences among thoſe which ſeem like; ſo the higheſt amuſement of the imagination is to trace likeneſſes and agreements among thoſe which ſeem different.

The principal rules which reſpect poetical compariſons, are, that they be introduced on proper occaſions, when the mind is diſpoſed to reliſh them; and not in the midſt of ſome ſevere and agitating paſſion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a reſemblance neither too near and obvious, ſo as to give little amuſement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, ſo as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they ſerve either to illuſtrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more clear and diſtinct; or at leaſt, to heighten and embelliſh it, by a ſuitable aſſociation of images †.

Every country has a ſcenery peculiar to itſelf; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For as he copies after nature, his alluſions will of courſe be taken from thoſe objects which he ſees around him, and which have often ſtruck his fancy. For this reaſon, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in ſome meaſure, acquainted with the natural hiſtory of the country where the ſcene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence ſo many lions, and tygers, and eagles and

† See Elements of Criticiſm, vol. 3. ch. 19.

ſerpents which, we meet with in the ſimilies of modern poets; as if theſe animals had acquired ſome right to a place in poetical compariſons for ever, becauſe employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but they are abſurdly uſed for illuſtration by us, who know them only at ſecond hand, or by deſcription. To moſt readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpoſe to deſcribe lions or tygers by ſimilies taken from men, than to compare men to lions. Oſſian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature, which he ſaw before his eyes; and by conſequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian ſcenery; but with the miſts, and clouds, and ſtorms, of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in ſimilies than Oſſian. There are in this collection as many, at leaſt, as in the whole Iliad and Odyſſey of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similies are ſparkling ornaments; and like all things that ſparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their luſtre. But if Oſſian's ſimilies be too frequent, they have this advantage of being commonly ſhorter, than Homer's; they interrupt his narration leſs; he juſt glances aſide to ſome reſembling object, and inſtantly returns to his former tract. Homer's ſimilies include a wider range of objects. But in return, Oſſian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be ſaid for all thoſe which Homer employs. The ſun, the moon, and the ſtars, clouds and meteors, lightning and thunder, ſeas and whales, rivers, torrents, winds, ice, rain, ſnow, dews, miſt, fire and ſmoke, trees and foreſts, heath and graſs and flowers, rocks and mountains, muſic and ſongs, light and darkneſs, ſpirits and ghoſts: theſe form the circle, within which Oſſian's compariſons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from birds and beaſts; as eagles, ſea-fowl, the horſe, the deer, and the mountain bee; and a

very few from ſuch operations of art as were then known. Homer has diverſified his imagery by many more alluſions to the animal world; to lions, bulls, goats, herds of cattle, ſerpents, inſects; and to the various occupations of rural and paſtoral life. Oſſian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the deſert, uncultivated ſtate of his country, which ſuggeſted to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudeſt form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous; and his acquaintance with them was ſlender, as they were little ſubjected to the uſes of man.

The great objection made to Oſſian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the ſame compariſons. In a work ſo thick ſown with ſimilies, one could not but expect to find images of the ſame kind ſometimes ſuggeſted to the poet by reſembling objects; eſpecially to a poet like Oſſian, who wrote from the immediate impulſe of poetical enthuſiaſm, and without much preparation of ſtudy or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his lions and bulls, and flocks, of ſheep recur with little or no variation; nay, ſometimes in the very ſame words? The objection made to Oſſian is, however, founded, in a great meaſure, upon a miſtake. It has been ſuppoſed by inattentive readers, that wherever the moon, the cloud, or the thunder, returns in a ſimile, it is the ſame ſimile, and the ſame moon, or cloud, or thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the ſimilies are widely different. The object, whence they are taken is indeed in ſubſtance the ſame; but the image is new: for the appearance of the object is changed; it is preſented to the fancy in another attitude; and clothed with new circumſtances, to make it ſuit the different illuſtration for which it is employed. In this, lies Oſſian's great art; in ſo happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was ac-

quainted, as to make them correſpond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one inſtance the moon, which is very frequently introduced into his compariſons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the moon is a greater object of attention, than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diverſified its appearance. The ſhield of a warrior is like "the darkened moon when it moves a dun circle thro' "the heavens." The face of a ghoſt, wan and pale, is like "the beam of the ſetting moon." And a different appearance of a ghoſt, thin and indiſtinct, is like "the new moon ſeen through the gathered miſt, when "the ſky pours down its flaky ſnow, and the world is "ſilent and dark;" or in a different form ſtill, it is like "the watery beam of the moon, when it ruſhes from "between two clouds, and the midnight ſhower is on "the field." A very oppoſite uſe is made of the moon in the deſcription of Agandecca: "She came in all her "beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the eaſt." Hope, ſucceeded by diſappointment, is "joy riſing on "her face, and ſorrow returning again, like a thin "cloud on the moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheered by Fingal's generoſity. "His face "brightened like the full moon of heaven, when the "clouds vaniſh away, and leave her calm and broad in "the midſt of the ſky." Vinvela is bright as the moon "when it trembles over the weſtern wave;" but the ſoul of the guilty Uthal is, "dark as the troubled face "of the moon, when it foretels the ſtorm." And by a very fanciful and uncommon alluſion, it is ſaid of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, "Nor long "ſhalt thou lift the ſpear, mildly ſhining beam of youth! "Death ſtands dim behind thee, like the darkened half "of the moon behind its growing light."

Another inſtance of the ſame nature may be taken from miſt, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Oſſian, he applies to a variety of purpoſes, and purſues through a great many forms.

Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is "like the mist of Cromla, "when it curls on the rock, and shines to the beam of "the west."—"The song comes with its music to "melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist that ri-"sing from a lake pours on the silent vale. The green "flowers are filled with dew. The sun returns in its "strength and the mist is gone†." But, for the most part, mist is employed as a similitude of some disagreeable or terrible object. "The soul of Nathos was sad, "like the sun in the day of mist, when his face is wa-"tery and dim." "The darkness of old age comes "like the mist of the desert." "The face of a ghost is "pale as the mist of Cromla." "The gloom of battle "is rolled along as mist that is poured on the valley, "when storms invade the silent sun-shine of heaven." Fame suddenly departing, is likened to "mist that flies "away before the rustling wind of the vale." A ghost, slowly vanishing, to "mist that melts by degrees on "the sunny hill." Cairbar, after his treacherous assassination of Oscar, is compared to a pestilential fog. "I love a foe like Cathmor," says Fingal, "his soul is "great; his arm is strong; his battles are full of fame. "But the little soul is like a vapour that hovers round "the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest "the winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave; "and it sends forth the dart of death" This is a simile highly finished. But there is another which is still more striking, founded also on mist, in the fourth book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contending; Cathmor the king interposes, rebukes and silences them.

† There is a remarkable propriety in this comparison. It is intended to explain the effect of soft and mournful music. Armin appears disturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor says to him, "Why bursts the sigh of Armin? Is there a "cause to mourn? The song comes with its music to melt and please the ear. It "is like soft mist, &c." That is, such mournful songs have a happy effect to soften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moisture of the mist refreshes and nourishes the flowers; whilst the sadness they occasion is only transient, and soon dispelled by the succeeding occupations and amusements of life: "The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone."

The poet intends to give us the higheſt idea of Cathmor's ſuperiority; and moſt effectually accompliſhes his intention by the following happy image. "They "ſunk from the king on either ſide; like two columns "of morning miſt, when the ſun riſes between them, "on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on ei-"ther ſide; each towards its reedy pool." Theſe inſtances may ſufficiently ſhow with what richneſs of imagination Oſſian's compariſons abound, and at the ſame time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it muſt be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is uſual to judge of poets from a compariſon of their ſimilies more than of other paſſages, it will perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to ſee how Homer and Oſſian have conducted ſome images of the ſame kind. This might be ſhown in many inſtances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general ſtore-houſe of all imagery, the ground-work of their compariſons muſt of courſe be frequently the ſame. I ſhall ſelect only a few of the moſt conſiderable from both poets. Mr. Pope's tranſlation of Homer can be of no uſe to us here. The parallel is altogether unfair between proſe, and the impoſing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the ſimplicity of a proſe tranſlation, that we can form any compariſon between the two bards.

The ſhock of two encountering armies, the noiſe and the tumult of battle, afford one of the moſt grand and awful ſubjects of deſcription; on which all epic poets have exerted their ſtrength. Let us firſt hear Homer. The following deſcription is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the ſame words† "When now "the conflicting hoſts joined in the field of battle, then "were mutually oppoſed ſhields and ſwords, and the "ſtrength of armed men. The boſſy bucklers were daſh-"ed againſt each other. The univerſal tumult roſe

† Iliad iv. 446. and Iliad viii. 60.

" There were mingled the triumphant ſhouts and the
" dying groans of the victors and the vanquiſhed. The
" earth ſtreamed with blood. As when winter torrents
" ruſhing from the mountains, pour into a narrow val-
" ley, their violent waters. They iſſue from a thouſand
" ſprings, and mix in the hollowed channel. The dif-
" tant ſhepherd hears on the mountain, their roar
" from afar. Such was the terror and the ſhout of
" the engaging armies." In another paſſage, the poet, much in the manner of Oſſian, heaps ſimile on ſimile, to expreſs the vaſtneſs of the idea, with which his imagination ſeems to labour. " With a mighty ſhout
" the hoſts engage. Not ſo loud roars the wave of
" ocean, when driven againſt the ſhore by the whole
" force of the boiſterous north; not ſo loud in the
" woods of the mountain, the noiſe of the flame, when
" riſing in its fury to conſume the foreſt; not ſo loud
" the wind among the lofty oaks, when the wrath of
" the ſtorm rages; as was the clamour of the Greeks
" and Trojans, when roaring terrible, they ruſhed a-
" gainſt each other ‖."

To theſe deſcriptions and ſimilies, we may oppoſe the following from Oſſian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the ſame kind employed; commonly leſs extended; but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characteriſes our poet. " As autumn's dark ſtorms pour from two echoing
" hills, towards each other approached the heroes.
" As two dark ſtreams from high rocks meet, and
" mix, and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark
" in battle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixed
" his ſtrokes with chief, and man with man. Steel
" clanging, ſounded on ſteel. Helmets are cleft on
" high; blood burſts and ſmokes around. As the
" troubled noiſe of the ocean, when roll the waves on
" high; as the laſt peal of the thunder of heaven, ſuch
" is the noiſe of battle. As roll a thouſand waves to
" the rock, ſo Swaran's hoſt came on; as meets a rock

‖ Iliad xiv. 393.

" a thouſand waves, ſo Inisfail met Swaran. Death " raiſes all his voices around, and mixes with the ſound " of ſhields. The field echoes from wing to wing, as " a hundred hammers that riſe by turns on the red ſon " of the furnace. As a hundred winds on Morven; as " the ſtreams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly ſucceſ- " ſive over heaven; or, as the dark ocean aſſaults the " ſhore of the deſert; ſo roaring, ſo vaſt, ſo terrible, the " armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath." In ſeveral of theſe images, there is a remarkable ſimilarity to Homer's; but what follows is ſuperior to any compariſon that Homer uſes on this ſubject. " The groan of the " people ſpread over the hills; it was like the thunder " of night, when the cloud burſts on Cona; and a thou- " ſand ghoſts ſhriek at once on the hollow wind." Never was an image of more awful ſublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. " As when " a ſhepherd," ſays Homer, " beholds from the rock " a cloud borne along the ſea by the weſtern wind; " black as pitch it appears from afar, ſailing over the " ocean, and carrying the dreadful ſtorm. He ſhrinks " at the ſight, and drives his flock into the cave: Such, " under the Ajaces, moved on, the dark, the thickened " phalanx to the war‖.—" They came," ſays Oſſian, " over the deſert like ſtormy clouds, when the " winds roll them over the heath; their edges are ting- " ed with lightning; and the echoing groves foreſee " the ſtorm." The edges of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a ſublime idea; but the ſhepherd and his flock, render Homer's ſimile more pictureſque. This is frequently the difference between the two poets. Oſſian gives no more than the main image, ſtrong and full. Homer adds circumſtances and appendages, which amuſe the fancy by enlivening the ſcenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army, to " clouds that are ſettled on the mountain top, in the

‖ Iliad iv. 275.

" day of calmneſs, when the ſtrength of the north wind " ſleeps†." Oſſian, with full as much propriety, compares the appearance of a diſordered army, to " the " mountain cloud, when the blaſt hath entered its " womb; and ſcatters the curling gloom on every ſide." Oſſian's clouds aſſume a great many forms; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fertile ſource of imagery to him. " The warriors followed their chiefs " like the gathering of the rainy clouds, behind the red " meteors of heaven." An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to " clouds, that having " long threatened rain, retire ſlowly behind the hills." The picture of Oithona, after ſhe had determined to die, is lively and delicate " Her ſoul was reſolved, " and the tear was dried from her wildly looking eye. " A troubled joy roſe on her mind, like the red path " of the lightning on a ſtormy cloud." The image alſo of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in ſilence, the aſſaſſination of Oſcar, until the moment came when his deſigns were ripe for execution, is extremely noble and complete in all its parts. " Cairbar heard their " words in ſilence, like the cloud of a ſhower; it ſtands " dark on Cromla, till the lightning burſts its ſide. The " valley gleams with red light; the ſpirits of the ſtorm " rejoice. So ſtood the ſilent king of Temora; at " length his words were heard."

Homer's compariſon of Achilles to the Dog-Star, is very ſublime. " Priam beheld him ruſhing along the " plain, ſhining in his armour, like the ſtar of autumn; " bright are its beams, diſtinguiſhed amidſt the multi- " tude of ſtars in the dark hour of night. It riſes in " its ſplendor; but its ſplendor is fatal; betokening " to miſerable men, the deſtroying heat‖." The firſt appearance of Fingal, is in like manner, compared by Oſſian, to a ſtar or meteor. " Fingal, tall in his ſhip, ſtretched " his bright lance before him. Terrible was the gleam " of his ſteel; it was like the green meteor of death, " ſetting in the heath of Malmor, when the traveller

† Iliad v. 522. ‖ Iliad xxii. 26.

" is alone, and the broad moon is darkened in heaven." The hero's appearance in Homer, is more magnificent; in Offian more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a ſtorm, is a ſimilitude frequent among poets for deſcribing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But the moſt beautiful, by far, of his compariſons founded on this object, indeed one of the moſt beautiful in the whole Iliad, is that on the death of Euphorbus. " As " the young and verdant olive, which a man hath reared " with care in a lonely field, where the ſprings of wa- " ter bubble around it; it is fair and flouriſhing; it is " fanned by the breath of all the winds, and loaded " with white bloſſoms; when the ſudden blaſt of a " whirlwind deſcending, roots it out from its bed, and " ſtretches it on the duſt†." To this, elegant as it is, we may oppoſe the following ſimile of Offian's, relating to the death of the three ſons of Uſnoth. " They " fell, like three young oaks which ſtood alone on the " hill. The traveller ſaw the lovely trees, and won- " dered how they grew ſo lonely. The blaſt of the de- " ſert came by night, and laid their green heads low. " Next day he returned; but they were withered, and " the heath was bare." Malvina's alluſion to the ſame object, in her lamentation over Oſcar, is ſo exquiſitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place alſo. " I " was a lovely tree in thy preſence, Oſcar! with all " my branches round me. But thy death came like a " blaſt from the deſert, and laid my green head low " The ſpring returned with its ſhowers; but no leaf " of mine aroſe." Several of Offian's ſimilies taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diverſified with well choſen circumſtances; ſuch as that upon the death of Ryno and Orla: " They have fallen like the " oak of the deſert; when it lies acroſs a ſtream, and " withers in the wind of the mountains:" Or that which Offian applies to himſelf; " I like an ancient " oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place; the blaſt

† Iliad xvii. 53.

"hath lopped my branches away; and I tremble at "the winds of the north."

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Offian makes the ſame uſe of compariſons taken from ſpirits and ghoſts. Swaran "roared in battle, like "the ſhrill ſpirit of a ſtorm that ſits dim on the clouds "of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner." His people gathered around Erragon, "like ſtorms a-"round the ghoſt of night, when he calls them from "the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on "the land of the ſtranger." "They fell before my "ſon, like groves in the deſert, when an angry ghoſt "ruſhes through night, and takes their green heads in "his hand." In ſuch images Offian appears in his ſtrength; for very ſeldom have ſupernatural beings been painted with ſo much ſublimity, and ſuch force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, muſt yield to him in ſimilies formed upon theſe. Take, for inſtance the following, which is the moſt remarkable of this kind in the Iliad. "Meriones follow-"ed Idomeneus to battle, like Mars the deſtroyer of "men, when he ruſhes to war. Terror, his beloved "ſon, ſtrong and fierce attends him; who fills with "diſmay, the moſt valiant hero. They come from "Thrace, armed againſt the Ephyrians and Phlegyans; "nor do they regard the prayers of either; but diſpoſe "of ſucceſs at their will‡" The idea here, is undoubtedly noble: but obſerve what a figure Offian ſets before the aſtoniſhed imagination, and with what ſublimely terrible circumſtances he has heightened it. "He ruſhed in the ſound of his arms, like the dread-"ful ſpirit of Loda, when he comes in the roar of "a thouſand ſtorms, and ſcatters battles from his eyes. "He ſits on a cloud over Lochlin's ſeas. His migh-"ty hand is on his ſword. The winds lift his flaming "locks. So terrible was Cuchullin in the day of his "fame."

Homer's compariſons relate chiefly to martial ſub-

‡ Iliad xiii. 298.

jects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Offian we find a greater variety of other ſubjects illuſtrated by ſimilies; particularly, the ſongs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumſtances of old age, ſorrow, and private diſtreſs; which give occaſion to much beautiful imagery. What, for inſtance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following ſimile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the diſhonour ſhe had ſuffered? "Chief of Strumon," replied the ſighing maid, "why didſt thou come over the "dark blue wave to Nuath's mournful daughter? "Why did not I paſs away in ſecret, like the flower of "the rock, that lifts its fair head unſeen, and ſtrews "its withered leaves on the blaſt?" The muſic of bards, a favourite object with Offian, is illuſtrated by a variety of the moſt beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm ſhower of ſpring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and ſtill lake. Two ſimilies on this ſubject, I ſhall quote, becauſe they would do honour to any of the moſt celebrated claſſics. The one is; "Sit "thou on the heath, O bard! and let us hear thy "voice; it is pleaſant as the gale of the ſpring that "ſighs on the hunter's ear, when he wakens from "dreams of joy, and has heard the muſic of the ſpirits "of the hill." The other contains a ſhort, but exquiſitely tender image, accompanied with the fineſt poetical painting. "The muſic of Carril was like the me-"mory of joys that are paſt, pleaſant and mournful to "the ſoul. The ghoſts of departed bards heard it from "Slimora's ſide. Soft ſounds ſpread along the wood; "and the ſilent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would ſuch imagery and ſuch ſcenery have made, had they been preſented to us adorned with the ſweetneſs and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have choſen all along to compare Offian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reaſon. There is a much nearer correſpondence between the times and

manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of ſociety; both are originals; both are diſtinguiſhed by ſimplicity, ſublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the Roman ſtatelineſs which he every where maintains, admit no parallel with the abrupt boldneſs, and enthuſiaſtic warmth of the Celtic bard. In one article, indeed, there is a reſemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Oſſian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and poliſhed, thoſe of the other more ſtrong; the tenderneſs of Virgil ſoftens, that of Oſſian diſſolves and overcomes the heart.

A reſemblance may be ſometimes obſerved between Oſſian's compariſons, and thoſe employed by the ſacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they uſe it with the utmoſt propriety†. The imagery of Scripture exhibits a ſoil and climate altogether different from thoſe of Oſſian; a warmer country, a more ſmiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine preſs, and the threſhing floor, are often preſented to us, the cedar and the palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the turtle, and the beds of lilies. The ſimilies are, like Oſſian's, generally ſhort, touching on one point of reſemblance, rather than ſpread out into little epiſodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpreſſible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations ſhall ruſh like the "ruſhings of many waters; but God ſhall rebuke "them, and they ſhall fly far off, and ſhall be chaſed "as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and "like the down of the thiſtle before the whirlwind ‖."

Beſides formal compariſons, the poetry of Oſſian is embelliſhed with many beautiful metaphors: Such as that remarkably fine one applied to Dengala, "She was

† See Dr. Lowth de Sacra Poeſi Hebræorum.
‖ Iſaiah xvii. 13.

" covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was " the houſe of pride." This mode of expreſſion, which ſuppreſſes the mark of compariſon, and ſubſtitutes a figured deſcription in room of the object deſcribed, is a great enlivener of ſtyle. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which without pauſing to form a regular ſimilie, paints the object at one ſtroke. " Thou " art to me the beam of the eaſt, riſing in a land un- " known."—" In peace thou art the gale of ſpring; " in war, the mountain ſtorm." " Pleaſant be thy " reſt, O lovely beam, ſoon haſt thou ſet on our hills! " The ſteps of thy departure were ſtately, like the " moon on the blue trembling wave. But thou haſt left us in darkneſs, firſt of the maids of Lutha! Soon " haſt thou ſet, Malvina! but thou riſeſt like the beam " of the eaſt, among the ſpirits of thy friends, where " they ſit in their ſtormy halls, the chambers of the " thunder." This is correct and finely ſupported. But in the following inſtance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it cloſes, by being improperly mixed with the literal ſenſe. " Trathal went forth with the ſtream of his " people; but they met a rock; Fingal ſtood unmov- " ed; broken they rolled back from his ſide. Nor " did they roll in ſafety; the ſpear of the king pur- " ſued their flight."

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Oſſian; as the undiſciplined imagination of early ages generally prompts exaggeration, and carries its objects to exceſs; whereas longer experience, and farther progreſs in the arts of life, chaſten men's ideas and expreſſions. Yet Oſſian's hyperboles appear not to me, either ſo frequent or ſo harſh as might at firſt have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated ſtate in which, as was before ſhewn, poetry ſubſiſted among the ancient Celtæ, than among moſt other barbarous nations. One of the moſt exaggerated deſcriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the

ſcout makes his report to Cuchullin of the landing of the foe. But this is ſo far from deſerving cenſure that it merits praiſe, as being on that occaſion natural and proper. The ſcout arrives, trembling and full of fears; and it is well known, that no paſſion diſpoſes men to hyperboliſe more than terror. It both annihilates themſelves in their own apprehenſion, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all thoſe indiſtinct images of formidable greatneſs, the natural marks of a diſturbed and confuſed mind, which occur in Moran's deſcription of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report which the affrighted Jewiſh ſpies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land through "which we have gone to ſearch it, is a land that eat-"eth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people "that we ſaw in it, are men of a great ſtature; and "there ſaw we giants, the ſons of Anak, which come "of the giants: and we were in our own ſight as graſs-"hoppers, and ſo were we in their ſight ‡."

With regard to perſonifications, I formerly obſerved that Oſſian was ſparing, and I accounted for his being ſo. Allegorical perſonages he has none; and their abſence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of thoſe ſhadowy beings, which have not the ſupport even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, ſeldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too viſible and phantaſtic; and overthrows that impreſſion of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the ſerious and pathetic ſcenes of Oſſian eſpecially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place as in tragedy; ſerving only unſeaſonably to amuſe the fancy, whilſt they ſtopped the current, and weakened the force of paſſion.

With apoſtrophes, or addreſſes to perſons abſent or dead, which have been, in all ages, the language of

‡ Numbers xiii. 32, 33.

paſſion, our poet abounds; and they are among his higheſt beauties. Witneſs the apoſtrophe, in the firſt book of Fingal, to the maid of Iniſtore, whoſe lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuchullin to Bragela at the concluſion of the ſame book. He commands the harp to be ſtruck in her praiſe; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately ſuggeſting to him a crowd of tender ideas; "Doſt thou raiſe "thy fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, "to find "the ſails of Cuchullin? The ſea is rolling far diſtant, "and its white foam ſhall deceive thee for my ſails." And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as, at that moment, really in this ſituation, he becomes afraid of the harm ſhe may receive from the inclemency of the night; and with an enthuſiaſm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious ſtrain of modern poetry, "Retire," he proceeds, "retire, "for it is night, my love, and the dark winds ſigh in "thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feaſts, and think "of the times that are paſt; for I will not return till "the ſtorm of war has ceaſed. O Connal, ſpeak of "wars and arms, and ſend her from my mind; for "lovely with her raven hair is the white-boſomed "daughter of Sorglan." This breathes all the native ſpirit of paſſion and tenderneſs.

The addreſſes to the ſun, to the moon, and to the evening ſtar, muſt draw the attention of every reader of taſte, as among the moſt ſplendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious to need any particular comment. In one paſſage only of the addreſs to the moon, there appears ſome obſcurity. "Whither doſt thou retire from thy "courſe, when the darkneſs of thy countenance grows? "Haſt thou thy hall like Oſſian? Dwelleſt thou in the "ſhadow of grief? Have thy ſiſters fallen from heaven? "Are they who rejoiced with thee at night, no more? "Yes, they have fallen, fair light! and thou doſt often "retire to mourn." We may be at a loſs to comprehend, at firſt view, the ground of theſe ſpecula-

tions of Offian, concerning the moon; but when all the circumftances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the preſent ſituation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any ſtrong paſſion, tinctures with its own diſpoſition, every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loſs of all his friends, is meditating on the different phaſes of the moon. Her waning and darkneſs, preſents to his melancholy imagination, the image of ſorrow; and preſently the idea ariſes, and is indulged, that, like himſelf, ſhe retires to mourn over the loſs of other moons, or of ſtars, whom he calls her ſiſters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkneſs ſuggeſted the idea of mourning, and mourning ſuggeſted nothing ſo naturally to Offian, as the death of beloved friends. An inſtance preciſely ſimilar of this influence of paſſion, may be ſeen in a paſſage which has always been admired of Shakeſpear's King Lear. The old man on the point of diſtraction, through the inhumanity of his daughters, ſees Edgar appear diſguiſed like a beggar and a madman.

Lear. Didſt thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?
Couldeſt thou leave nothing? Didſt thou give them all?
Kent. He hath no daughters, Sir.
Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have ſubdued nature
To ſuch a lowneſs, but his unkind daughters.
King Lear, Act 3. Scene 5.

The apoſtrophe to the winds, in the opening of Dar-thula, is in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. "But the "winds deceive thee, O Dar-thula, and deny the "woody Etha to thy ſails. Theſe are not thy moun-"tains, Nathos, nor is that the rear of thy climbing "waves. The halls of Cairbar are near, and the towers "of the foe lift their head. Where have ye been, ye "ſouthern winds; when the ſons of my love were de-"ceived? But ye have been ſporting on plains, and

" purſuing the thiſtle's beard. O that ye had been ruſt-
" ling in the ſails of Nathos, till the hills of Etha roſe!
" till they roſe in their clouds, and ſaw their coming
" chief." This paſſage is remarkable for the reſem-blance it bears to an expoſtulation with the wood nymphs, on their abſence at a critical time; which as a favourite poetical idea, Virgil has copied from Theocritus, and Milton has very happily imitated from both.

> Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorſeleſs deep
> Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
> For neither were ye playing on the ſteep
> Where your old bards, the famous druids, lie;
> Nor on the ſhaggy top of Mona, high,
> Nor yet where Deva ſpreads her wizard ſtream †:

Having now treated fully of Oſſian's talents with reſpect to deſcription and imagery, it only remains to make ſome obſervations on his ſentiments. No ſentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, ſuited to the character and ſituation of thoſe who utter them. In this reſpect, Oſſian is as correct as moſt writers. His characters, as above obſerved, are in general well ſupported; which could not have been the caſe, had the ſentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of perſonages of different ages, ſexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they ſpeak and act with a propriety of ſentiment and behaviour, which it is ſurprizing to find in ſo rude an age. Let the poem of Dar-thula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that ſentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they muſt alſo be ſublime and pathetic.

The ſublime is not confined to ſentiment alone. It belongs to deſcription alſo; and whether in deſcrip-

† Milton's Lycidas. See Theocrit. Idyll. I.

Πᾶ ποκ' ἄρ ἦσθ' ὄτα Δάφνις ἐτάκετο; πᾶ ποκα, Νύμφαι, &c.

And Virg. Eclog 10.

Quae nemora, aut qui vos ſaltus habuere, puellae, &c.

tion or in ſentiment, imports ſuch ideas preſented to the mind, as raiſe it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and aſtoniſhment. This is the higheſt effect either of eloquence or poetry: And to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the ſtrongeſt and warmeſt conception of ſome object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Oſſian, may, I think, ſufficiently appear from many of the paſſages I have already had occaſion to quote. To produce more inſtances, were ſuperfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda, in Carric-thura; if the encounters of the armies of Fingal; if the addreſs to the ſun, in Carthon; if the ſimilies founded upon ghoſts and ſpirits of the night, all formerly mentioned, be not admitted as examples, and illuſtrious ones too, of the true poetical ſublime, I confeſs myſelf entirely ignorant of this quality in writing.

All the circumſtances, indeed, of Oſſian's compoſition, are favourable to the ſublime, more perhaps than to any other ſpecies of beauty. Accuracy and correctneſs; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts, we may look for in poliſhed times. The gay and the beautiful, will appear to more advantage in the midſt of ſmiling ſcenery and pleaſurable themes. But amidſt the rude ſcenes of nature, amidſt rocks and torrents, and whirlwinds and battles, dwells the ſublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offſpring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the leſſer graces, and perfectly conſiſtent with a certain noble diſorder. It aſſociates naturally with that grave and ſolemn ſpirit, which diſtinguiſhes our author. For the ſublime, is an awful and ſerious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of trouble, and terror, and darkneſs.

Ipſe pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruſca
Fulmina molitur dextra; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit; fugere ferae; et mortalia corda
Per gentes, humilis ſtravit pavor; ille, flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit.... VIRG. GEORG. I.

Simplicity and conciſeneſs, are never failing characteriſtics of the ſtyle of a ſublime writer. He reſts on the majeſty of his ſentiments, not on the pomp of his expreſſions. The main ſecret of being ſublime, is to ſay great things in few, and in plain words: For every ſuperfluous decoration degrades a ſublime idea. The mind riſes and ſwells when a lofty deſcription or ſentiment is preſented to it, in its native form. But no ſooner does the poet attempt to ſpread out this ſentiment or deſcription, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the tranſport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the ſublime is gone. Hence the conciſe and ſimple ſtyle of Oſſian, gives great advantage to his ſublime conceptions; and aſſiſts them in ſeizing the imagination with full power †.

Sublimity, as belonging to ſentiment, coincides in a great meaſure with magnanimity, heroiſm, and generoſity of ſentiment. Whatever diſcovers human nature in its greateſt elevation; whatever beſpeaks a high effort of ſoul; or ſhews a mind ſuperior to pleaſures, to dangers, and to death, forms what may be called the moral or ſentimental ſublime. For this, Oſſian is eminently diſtinguiſhed. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble ſentiment, throughout all his works. Particularly in all the ſentiments of Fingal, there is a grandeur and loftineſs proper to ſwell the

† The noted ſaying of Julius Cæſar, to the pilot in a ſtorm; "Quid times? "Cæſarem vehis;" is magnanimous and ſublime. Lucan, not ſatisfied with this ſimple conciſeneſs, reſolved to amplify and improve the thought. Obſerve how, every time he twiſts it round, it departs farther from the ſublime, till, at laſt, it ends in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, Pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade ſinum. Italiam, ſi cœlo auctore, recuſas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi cauſa hæc eſt juſta timoris
Vectorem non noſſe tuum; [illegible] numina nunquam
Deſtituunt; de quo male tum fortuna meretur,
Cum poſt vota venit; medias perrumpe procellas
Tutela ſecure mea. Cœli ſite [illegible]que,
Non puppis noſtræ, labor eſt. [illegible] Cæſare preſſam
A fluctu defendit onus.
---Quid tanta ſtrage paratur,
Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cœlique tumultu
Quid præſtet fortuna mihi.------

PHARSAL. V. 578.

mind with the higheſt ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he purſues, are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generoſity more than by force. A portion of the ſame ſpirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debaſing paſſions among Fingal's warriors; no ſpirit of avarice or of inſult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a deſire of being diſtinguiſhed and remembered for gallant actions; a love of juſtice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the ſtrain of ſentiment in the works of Oſſian.

But the ſublimity of moral ſentiments, if they wanted the ſoftening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and ſtiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling in compariſon of that deep intereſt which the heart takes in tender and pathetic ſcenes; where, by a myſterious attachment to the objects of compaſſion, we are pleaſed and delighted even whilſt we mourn. With ſcenes of this kind, Oſſian abounds; and his high merit in theſe, is unconteſtable. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the leaſt ſenſibility, will queſtion. The general character of his poetry, is the heroic, mixed with the elegiac ſtrain; admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expreſſes, it "the joy of grief," it is viſible, that on all moving ſubjects, he delights to exert his genius; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic ſituations, than what his works preſent. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the ſimple and natural motions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation; no ſubtile refinements on ſorrow; no ſubſtitution of deſcription in place of paſſion. Oſſian felt ſtrongly himſelf; and the heart when uttering its

native language never fails, by powerful ſympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for inſtance, can be more moving, than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune? Gaul, the ſon of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what ſhe had ſuffered, comes to her reſcue. Their meeting is tender in the higheſt degree. He propoſes to engage her foe, in ſingle combat, and gives her in charge what ſhe is to do, if he himſelf ſhall fall. "And "ſhall the daughter of Nuath live?" ſhe replied with a burſting ſigh. "Shall I live in Tromathon, and the ſon "of Morni low? My heart is not of that rock; nor my "ſoul careleſs as that ſea, which lifts its blue waves to "every wind, and rolls beneath the ſtorm. The blaſt, "which ſhall lay thee low, ſhall ſpread the branches of "Oithona on earth. We ſhall wither together, ſon of "car-borne Morni! The narrow houſe is pleaſant to "me; and the gray ſtone of the dead; for never more "will I leave thy rocks, ſea-ſurrounded Tromathon! "Chief of Strumon, why cameſt thou over the waves "to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I paſs "away in ſecret like the flower of the rock, that lifts "its fair head unſeen, and ſtrews its withered leaves on "the blaſt? Why didſt thou come, O Gaul! to hear "my departing ſigh? O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in "the bright beam of my fame! Then had my years "come on with joy; and the virgins would bleſs my "ſteps. But I fall in youth, ſon of Morni, and my fa-"ther ſhall bluſh in his hall."

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuchullin's expreſſions of grief after his defeat, we behold the ſentiments of a hero, generous but deſponding. The ſituation is remarkably fine. Cuchullin, rouſed from his cave, by the noiſe of battle, ſees Fingal victorious in the field. He is deſcribed as kindling at the ſight. "His hand is on "the ſword of his fathers; his red-rolling eyes on the "foe. He thrice attempted to ruſh to battle; and "thrice did Connal ſtop him;" ſuggeſting, that Fin

gal was routing the foe; and that he ought not, by the ſhow of ſuperfluous aid, to deprive the king of any part of the honour of a victory, which was owing to him alone. Cuchullin yields to this generous ſentiment; but we ſee it ſtinging him to the heart with the ſenſe of his own diſgrace. "Then, Carril, go," replied the chief, "and greet the king of Morven. When Loch-"lin falls away like a ſtream after rain, and the noiſe "of the battle is over, then be thy voice ſweet in his "ear, to praiſe the king of ſwords. Give him the "ſword of Caithbat; for Cuchullin is worthy no more "to lift the arms of his fathers. But, O ye ghoſts of "the lonely Cromla! Ye ſouls of chiefs that are no "more! Be ye the companions of Cuchullin, and talk "to him in the cave of his ſorrow. For never more "ſhall I be renowned among the mighty in the land. "I am like a beam that has ſhone: Like a miſt that "has fled away; when the blaſt of the morning came, "and brightened the ſhaggy ſide of the hill. Connal! "talk of arms no more: Departed is my fame. My "ſighs ſhall be on Cromla's wind; till my footſteps "ceaſe to be ſeen. And thou, white-boſomed Brage-"la! mourn over the fall of my fame; for vanquiſh-"ed, I will never return to thee, thou ſun-beam of "Dunſcaich!"

——————— Æſtuat Ingens
Uno in corde pudor, luctuſque, et conſcia virtus.

Beſides ſuch extended pathetic ſcenes, Oſſian frequently pierces the heart by a ſingle unexpected ſtroke. When Oſcar fell in battle, "No father mourned his ſon "ſlain in youth; no brother, his brother of love; they fell "without tears, for the chief of the people was low." In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the ſixth Iliad, the circumſtance of the child in his nurſe's arms, has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderneſs of the ſcene. In the following paſſage relating to the death of Cuchullin, we find a circumſtance that muſt ſtrike the imagination with ſtill greater force. "And is the ſon of Semo fallen?" ſaid

Carril with a ſigh. "Mournful are Tura's walls, and "ſorrow dwells at Dunſcaich. Thy ſpouſe is left alone "in her youth; the ſon of thy love is alone. He "ſhall come to Bragela, and aſk her why ſhe weeps. "He ſhall lift his eyes to the wall, and ſee his father's "ſword. Whoſe ſword is that? he will ſay; and the "ſoul of his mother is ſad." Soon after Fingal had ſhewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his ſons, fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accuſtomed manner, his ſons to the chaſe. "Call," ſays he, "Fillan and Ryno—But he is not here—My ſon "reſts on the bed of death." This unexpected ſtart of anguiſh, is worthy of the higheſt tragic poet,

> If ſhe come in, ſhe'll ſure ſpeak to my wife--.
> My wife!-- my wife --What wife?---I have no wife--.
> Oh inſupportable! Oh heavy hour!
>
> OTHELLO, Act 5. Scene 7.

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is ſimilar; but the circumſtances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confuſion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himſelf, and ſurpreſſes his riſing grief.

The contraſt which Oſſian frequently makes between his preſent and his former ſtate, diffuſes over his whole poetry, a ſolemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impreſſion on every heart. The concluſion of the Songs of Selma, is particularly calculated for this purpoſe. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind a ſtronger, and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard. "Such were the words of "the bards in the days of the ſong; when the king "heard the muſic of harps, and the tales of other times. "The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard "the lovely ſound. They praiſed the voice of Cona†; "the firſt among a thouſand bards. But age is now "on my tongue, and my ſoul has failed. I hear, ſome-

† Oſſian himſelf is poetically called the Voice of Cona.

" times, the ghoſts of bards, and learn their pleaſant
" ſong. But memory fails on my mind; I hear the
" call of years. They ſay, as they paſs along; why
" does Oſſian ſing? Soon ſhall he lie in the narrow
" houſe, and no bard ſhall raiſe his fame. Roll on,
" ye dark-brown years! for ye bring no joy in your
" courſe. Let the tomb open to Oſſian, for his
" ſtrength has failed. The ſons of the ſong are gone
" to reſt. My voice remains, like a blaſt, that roars
" lonely on a ſea-ſurrounded rock, after the winds are
" laid. The dark moſs whiſtles there, and the diſtant
" mariner ſees the waving trees."

Upon the whole; if to feel ſtrongly, and to deſcribe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Oſſian muſt, after fair examination, be held to poſſeſs that genius in a high degree. The queſtion is not whether a few improprieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this, or that paſſage, might not have been worked up with more art and ſkill, by ſome writer of happier times? A thouſand ſuch cold and frivolous criticiſms, are altogether indeciſive as to his genuine merit. But has he the ſpirit, the fire, the inſpiration of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his ſentiments? Does he intereſt by his deſcriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? Theſe are the great characteriſtics of true poetry. Where theſe are found, he muſt be a minute critic indeed, who can dwell upon ſlight defects. A few beauties of this high kind, tranſcend whole volumes of faultleſs mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt, Oſſian may ſometimes appear by reaſon of his conciſeneſs. But he is ſublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extenſive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fulneſs and accuracy of deſcription, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in ſtrength of imagination, in grandeur of ſentiment, in native majeſty of paſſion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear ſtream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent

of fire. Of art too, he is far from being deſtitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as ſtrength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other reſpects much leſs, than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tendereſt ſympathies, and inſpire the moſt generous emotions. No reader, can riſe from him, without being warmed with the ſentiments of humanity, virtue, and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but muſt judge the tranſlation to deſerve the higheſt praiſe, on account of its beauty and elegance.

Of its faithfulneſs and accuracy, I have been aſſured by perſons ſkilled in the Galic tongue, who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of theſe poems of Oſſian. To transfuſe ſuch ſpirited and fervid ideas from one language into another; to tranſlate literally, and yet with ſuch a glow of poetry; to keep alive ſo much paſſion, and ſupport ſo much dignity throughout, is one of the moſt difficult works of genius, and proves the tranſlator to have been animated with no ſmall portion of Oſſian's ſpirit.

The meaſured proſe which he has employed, poſſeſſes conſiderable advantages above any ſort of verſification he could have choſen. Whilſt it pleaſes and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the ſame time, freer from conſtraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the ſpirit of the original to be exhibited with more juſtneſs, force, and ſimplicity. Elegant, however, and maſterly as Mr. Macpherſon's tranſlation is, we muſt never forget, whilſt we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a ſevere teſt. For, we are examining a poet ſtripped of his native dreſs: diveſted of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the

charm of verſification in their original languages. If, then, deſtitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal verſion, Oſſian ſtill has power to pleaſe as a poet; and not to pleaſe only, but often to command, to tranſport, to melt the heart; we may very ſafely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius; and we may boldly aſſign him a place among thoſe whoſe works are to LAST FOR AGES.

APPENDIX.

THE ſubſtance of the preceding diſſertation was originally delivered, ſoon after the firſt publication of Fingal, in the courſe of my lectures in the Univerſity of Edinburgh; and at the deſire of ſeveral of the hearers, was afterwards enlarged and given to the public.

As the degree of antiquity belonging to the Poems of Oſſian, appeared to be a point which might bear diſpute, I endeavoured, from internal evidence, to ſhow that theſe poems muſt be referred to a very remote period; without pretending to aſcertain preciſely the date of their compoſition. I had not the leaſt ſuſpicion, when this diſſertation was firſt publiſhed, that there was any occaſion for ſupporting their authenticity, as genuine productions of the Highlands of Scotland, as tranſlations from the Galic language; not forgeries of a ſuppoſed tranſlator. In Scotland their authenticity was never called in queſtion. I myſelf had particular reaſons to be fully ſatisfied concerning it. My knowledge of Mr. Macpherſon's perſonal honour and integrity, gave me full aſſurance of his being incapable of putting ſuch a groſs impoſition, firſt, upon his friends, and then upon the public; and if this had not been ſufficient, I knew, beſides, that the manner in which theſe poems were brought to light, was entirely inconſiſtent with any fraud. An accidental converſation with a gentleman diſtinguiſhed in the literary world, gave occaſion to Mr. Macpherſon's tranſlating literally one or two ſmall pieces of the old Galic poetry. Theſe being ſhewn to me and ſome others, rendered us very deſirous of becoming more acquainted with that poetry. Mr. Mac-

pherſon, afraid of not doing juſtice to compoſitions which he admired in the original, was very backward to undertake the taſk of tranſlating; and the publication of *The Fragments of Ancient Poems*, was, with no ſmall importunity extorted from him. The high reputation which theſe preſently acquired, made it, he thought, unjuſt that the world ſhould be deprived of the poſſeſſion of more, if more of the ſame kind could be recovered: and Mr. Macpherſon was warmly urged by ſeveral gentlemen of rank and taſte, to diſengage himſelf from other occupations, and to undertake a journey through the Highlands and Iſlands, on purpoſe to make a collection of thoſe curious remains of ancient genius. He complied with their deſire, and ſpent ſeveral months in viſiting thoſe remote parts of the country; during which time he correſponded frequently with his friends in Edinburgh, informed them of his progreſs, of the applications which he made in different quarters, and of the ſucceſs which he met with; ſeveral letters of his, and of thoſe who aſſiſted him in making diſcoveries paſſed through my hands; his undertaking was the object of conſiderable attention; and returning at laſt, fraught with the poetical treaſures of the north, he ſet himſelf to tranſlate under the eye of ſome who were acquainted with the Galic language, and looked into his manuſcripts; and, by a large publication, made an appeal to all the natives of the Highlands and Iſlands of Scotland, whether he had been faithful to his charge, and done juſtice to their well known and favourite poems.

Such a tranſaction certainly did not afford any favourable opportunity for carrying on an impoſture. Yet in England, it ſeems, an opinion has prevailed with ſome, that an impoſture has been carried on; that the poems which have been given to the world are not tranſlations of the works of any old Galic bard, but modern compoſitions, formed, as it is ſaid, upon a higher plan of poetry and ſentiment than could belong to an age and a country reputed barbarous: And I have been called up-

on and urged to produce ſome evidence for ſatisfying the world that they are not the compoſitions of Mr. Macpherſon himſelf, under the borrowed name of Oſſian.

If the queſtion had been concerning manuſcripts brought from ſome diſtant or unknown region, with which we had no intercourſe; or concerning tranſlations from an Aſiatic or American language which ſcarce any body underſtood, ſuſpicions might naturally have ariſen, and an author's aſſertions have been anxiouſly and ſcrupulouſly weighed. But in the caſe of a literal tranſlation, profeſſed to be given of old traditionary poems of our own country; of poems aſſerted to be known in the original to many thouſand inhabitants of Great Britain, and illuſtrated too by many of their current tales and ſtories concerning them, ſuch extreme ſcepticiſm is altogether out of place. For who would have been either ſo hardy or ſo ſtupid, as to attempt a forgery which could not have failed of being immediately detected? Either the author muſt have had the influence to engage, as confederates in the fraud, all the natives of the Highlands and Iſlands, diſperſed as they are throughout every corner of the Britiſh dominions; or, we ſhould, long ere this time, have heard their united voice exclaiming, "Theſe are "not our poems, nor what we were ever accuſtomed "to hear from our bards or our fathers." Such remonſtrances would, at leaſt, have reached thoſe who dwell in a part of the country which is adjacent to the Highlands; and muſt have come loud to the ears of ſuch eſpecially, as were known to be the promoters of Mr. Macpherſon's undertaking. The ſilence of a whole country in this caſe, and of a country, whoſe inhabitants are well known to be attached, in a remarkable degree, to all their own antiquities, is of as much weight as a thouſand poſitive teſtimonies. And ſurely, no perſon of common underſtanding would have adventured, as Mr. Macpherſon has done, in his diſſertation on Temora, to engage in a controverſy with the

whole Iriſh nation concerning theſe poems, and to inſiſt upon the honour of them being due to Scotland, if they had been mere forgeries of his own; which the Scots, in place of ſupporting ſo ridiculous a claim, muſt have inſtantly rejected.

But as reaſoning alone is apt not to make much impreſſion, where ſuſpicions have been entertained concerning a matter of fact, it was thought proper to have recourſe to expreſs teſtimonies. I have accordingly applied to ſeveral perſons of credit and honour, both gentlemen of fortune, and clergymen of the eſtabliſhed church, who are natives of the Highlands or Iſlands of Scotland, and well acquainted with the language of the country, deſiring to know their real opinion of the tranſlations publiſhed by Mr. Macpherſon. Their original letters to me, in return, are in my poſſeſſion. I ſhall give a fair and faithful account of the reſult of their teſtimony: And I have full authority to uſe the names of thoſe gentlemen for what I now advance.

I muſt begin with affirming, that though among thoſe with whom I have correſponded, ſome have had it in their power to be more particular and explicit in their teſtimony than others; there is not, however, one perſon, who inſinuates the moſt remote ſuſpicion that Mr. Macpherſon has either forged, or adulterated any one of the poems he has publiſhed. If they make any complaints of him, it is on account of his having omitted other poems which they think of equal merit with any which he has publiſhed. They all, without exception, concur in holding his tranſlations to be genuine, and proceed upon their authenticity as a fact acknowledged throughout all thoſe northern provinces; aſſuring me that any one would be expoſed to ridicule among them, who ſhould call it in queſtion. I muſt obſerve, that I had no motive to direct my choice of the perſons to whom I applied for information preferably to others, except their being pointed out to me, as the perſons in their different counties who were moſt likely to give light on this head.

With regard to the manner in which the originals of theſe poems have been preſerved and tranſmitted, which has been repreſented as ſo myſterious and inexplicable, I have received the following plain account: That until the preſent century, almoſt every great family in the Highlands had their own bard, to whoſe office it belonged to be maſter of all the poems and ſongs of the country; that among theſe poems the works of Oſſian are eaſily diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of later bards by ſeveral peculiarities in his ſtyle and manner; that Oſſian has been always reputed the Homer of the Highlands, and all his compoſitions held in ſingular eſteem and veneration; that the whole country is full of traditionary ſtories derived from his poems, concerning Fingal and his race of heroes, of whom there is not a child but has heard, and not a diſtrict in which there are not places pointed out famous for being the ſcene of ſome of their feats of arms; that it was wont to be the great entertainment of the Highlanders, to paſs the winter evenings in diſcourſing of the times of Fingal, and rehearſing theſe old poems, of which they have been all along enthuſiaſtically fond; that when aſſembled at their feſtivals, or on any of their public occaſions, wagers were often laid who could repeat moſt of them, and to have ſtore of them in their memories, was both an honourable and a profitable acquiſition, as it procured them acceſs into the families of their great men; that with regard to their antiquity, they are beyond all memory or tradition; inſomuch that there is a word commonly uſed in the Highlands to this day, when they would expreſs any thing which is of the moſt remote or unknown antiquity, importing that it belongs to the age of Fingal.

I am farther informed, that after the uſe of letters was introduced into that part of the country, the bards and others began early to commit ſeveral of theſe poems to writing; that old manuſcripts of them, many of which are now deſtroyed or loſt, are known and at-

teſted to have been in the poſſeſſion of ſome great families; that the moſt valuable of thoſe which remained were collected by Mr. Macpherſon during his journey through that country: that though the poems of Oſſian, ſo far as they were handed down by oral tradition, were no doubt liable to be interpolated, and to have their parts disjoined and put out of their natural order, yet by comparing together the different oral editions of them (if we may uſe that phraſe) in different corners of the country, and by comparing theſe alſo with the manuſcripts which he obtained, Mr. Macpherſon had it in his power to aſcertain, in a great meaſure, the genuine original, to reſtore the parts to their proper order, and to give the whole to the public in that degree of correctneſs, in which it now appears.

I am alſo acquainted, that if enquiries had been made fifty or threeſcore years ago, many more particulars concerning theſe poems might have been learned, and many more living witneſſes have been produced for atteſting their authenticity; but that the maners of the inhabitants of the Highland countries have of late undergone a great change. Agriculture, trades, and manufactures, begin to take place of hunting, and the ſhepherd's life. The introduction of the buſy and laborious arts has conſiderably abated that poetical enthuſiaſm which is better ſuited to a vacant and indolent ſtate. The fondneſs of reciting their old poems decays; the cuſtom of teaching them to their children is fallen into deſuetude; and few are now to be found, except old men, who can rehearſe from memory any conſiderable parts of them.

For theſe particulars, concerning the ſtate of the Highlands and the tranſmiſſion of Oſſian's poems, I am indebted to the reverend and very learned and ingenious Mr. John Macpherſon, miniſter of Slate, in the Iſland of Sky; and the reverend Mr. Donald Macqueen, miniſter of Kilmuir, in Sky; Mr. Donald Macleod, miniſter of Glenelg, in Inverneſs-ſhire; Mr. Lewis Grant, miniſter of Duthel, in Inverneſs-ſhire;

Mr. Angus Macneil, miniſter of the Iſland of South Uiſt; Mr. Neil Macleod, miniſter of Roſs, in the Iſland of Mull; and Mr. Alexander Macauly, chaplain to the 88th regiment.

The honourable Colonel Hugh Mackay of Bighouſe, in the ſhire of Sutherland; Donald Campbell of Airds, in Argyleſhire, Eſq.; Æneas Mackintoſh of Mackintoſh, in Inverneſs ſhire, Eſq.; and Ronald Macdonell of Keappoch, in Lochaber, Eſq. captain in the 87th regiment commanded by Colonel Fraſer, all concur in teſtifying that Mr. Macpherſon's collection conſiſts of genuine Highland poems; known to them to be ſuch, both from the general report of the country where they live, and from their own remembrance of the originals. Colonel Mackay aſſerts very poſitively, upon perſonal knowledge, that many of the poems publiſhed by Mr. Macpherſon are true and faithful tranſlations. Mr. Campbell declares that he has heard many of them, and Captain Macdonell that he has heard parts of every one of them, recited in the original language.

James Grant of Rothiemurchus, Eſq. and Alexander Grant of Delrachny, Eſq. both in the ſhire of Inverneſs deſired to be named as vouchers for the poems of Fingal in particular. They remember to have heard it often in their younger days, and are poſitive that Mr. Macpherſon has given a juſt tranſlation of it.

Lauchlan Macpherſon of Strathmaſhie, in Inverneſs-ſhire, Eſq. gives a very full and explicit teſtimony, from particular knowledge, in the following words: That in the year 1760, he accompanied Mr. Macpherſon during ſome part of his journey through the Highlands in ſearch of the poems of Oſſian; that he aſſiſted him in collecting them; that he took down from oral tradition, and tranſcribed from old manuſcripts by far the greateſt part of thoſe pieces Mr. Macpherſon has publiſhed; that ſince the publication he has carefully compared the tranſlation with the copies of the originals in his hands; and that he finds it amaz-

ingly literal, even to ſuch a degree as often to preſerve the cadence of the Galic verſification. He affirms, that among the manuſcripts which were at that time in Mr. Macpherſon's poſſeſſion, he ſaw one of as old a date as the year 1410.

Sir James Macdonald of Macdonald, in the Iſland of Sky, Baronet, aſſured me, that after having made, at my deſire, all the enquiries he could in his part of the country, he entertained no doubt that Mr. Macpherſon's collection conſiſted entirely of authentic Highland poems; that he had lately heard ſeveral parts of them repeated in the original, in the Iſland of Sky, with ſome variations from the printed tranſlation, ſuch as might naturally be expected from the circumſtances of oral tradition; and ſome parts, in particular the epiſode of Fainaſollis in the third book of Fingal, which agree literally with the tranſlation; and added, that he had heard recitations of other poems not tranſlated by Mr. Macpherſon, but generally reputed to be of Oſſian's compoſition, which were of the ſame ſpirit and ſtrain with ſuch as are tranſlated, and which he eſteemed not inferior to any of them in ſublimity of deſcription, dignity of ſentiment, or any other of the beauties of poetry. This laſt particular muſt have great weight; as it is well known how much the judgment of Sir James Macdonald deſerves to be relied upon, in every thing that relates to literature and taſte.

The late reverend Mr. Alexander Macfarlane, miniſter of Arrachar in Dumbartonſhire, who was remarkably eminent for his profound knowledge in Galic learning and antiquities, wrote to me ſoon after the publication of Mr. Macpherſon's work, terming it a maſterly tranſlation; informing me that he had often heard ſeveral of theſe poems in the original, and remarked many paſſages ſo particularly ſtriking beyond any thing he had ever read in any human compoſition, that he never expected to ſee a ſtrength of genius able to do them that juſtice in a tranſlation, which Mr. Macpherſon has done.

Norman Macleod of Macleod, in the Iſland of Sky, Eſq. Walter Macfarlane of Macfarlane, in Dumbartonſhire, Eſq. Mr. Alexander Macmillan, deputy-keeper of his Majeſty's ſignet, Mr. Adam Ferguſſon, profeſſor of moral philoſophy in the Univerſity of Edinburgh, and many other gentlemen, natives of the Highland counties, whom I had occaſion to converſe with upon this ſubject, declare, that though they cannot now repeat from memory any of theſe poems in the original, yet from what they have heard in their youth, and from the impreſſion of the ſubject ſtill remaining on their minds, they firmly believe thoſe which Mr. Macpherſon has publiſhed, to be the old Poems of Oſſian current in the country.

Deſirous, however, to have this tranſlation particularly compared with the oral editions of any who had parts of the original diſtinctly on their memory, I applied to ſeveral clergymen to make inquiry in their reſpective pariſhes concerning ſuch perſons; and to compare what they rehearſed with the printed verſion. Accordingly, from the reverend Mr. John Macpherſon, miniſter of Slate, in Sky; Mr. Neil Macleod, miniſter of Roſs, in Mull; Mr. Angus Macneil, miniſter of South Uiſt; Mr. Donald Macqueen, miniſter of Kilmuir, in Sky; and Mr. Donald Macleod, miniſter of Glenelg; I have had reports on this head, containing diſtinct and explicit teſtimonies to almoſt the whole epic poem of Fingal, from beginning to end, and to ſeveral alſo of the leſſer poems, as rehearſed in the original, in their preſence, by perſons whoſe names and places of abode they mention, and compared by themſelves with the printed tranſlation. They affirm that in many places, what was rehearſed in their preſence agreed literally and exactly with the tranſlation. In ſome places they found variations from it, and variations even among different rehearſers of the ſame poem in the original; as words and ſtanzas omitted by ſome which others repeated, and the order and connection in ſome

places changed. But they remark, that thoſe variations are on the whole not very material; and that Mr. Macpherſon ſeemed to them to follow the moſt juſt and authentic copy of the ſenſe of his author. Some of theſe clergymen, particularly Mr. Neil Macleod, can themſelves repeat from memory ſeveral paſſages of Fingal; the tranſlation of which they aſſure me is exact. Mr. Donald Macleod acquaints me, that it was in his houſe Mr. Macpherſon had the deſcription of Cuchullin's horſes and chariot, in the firſt book of Fingal, given him by Allan Macaſkill, ſchoolmaſter. Mr. Angus Macneil writes, that Mr. Macdonald, a pariſhioner of his, declares, that he has often ſeen and read a great part of an ancient manuſcript, once in the poſſeſſion of the family of Clanronald, and afterwards carried to Ireland, containing many of theſe poems; and that he rehearſed before him ſeveral paſſages out of Fingal, which agreed exactly with Mr. Macpherſon's tranſlation; that Neil Macmurrich, whoſe predeceſſors had for many generations been bards to the family of Clanronald, declared alſo in his preſence, that he had often ſeen and read the ſame old manuſcript; that he himſelf, gave to Mr. Macpherſon a manuſcript containing ſome of the poems which are now tranſlated and publiſhed, and rehearſed before Mr. Macneil, in the original, the whole of the poem intitled Dar-thula, with very little variation from the printed tranſlation. I have received the ſame teſtimony concerning this poem, Dar-thula, from Mr. Macpherſon, miniſter of Slate; and in a letter communicated to me from Lieutenant Duncan Macnicol, of the 88th regiment, informing me of its being recited in the original, in their preſence, from beginning to end: On which I lay the more ſtreſs, as any perſon of taſte who turns to that poem will ſee, that it is one of the moſt highly finiſhed in the whole collection, and moſt diſtinguiſhed for poetical and ſentimental beauties; inſomuch, that whatever genius could produce Dar-thula, muſt be judged fully equal to any performance

contained in Mr. Macpherſon's publication. I muſt add here, that though they who have compared the tranſlation with what they have heard rehearſed of the original, beſtow high praiſes both upon Mr. Macpherſon's genius and his fidelity; yet I find it to be their general opinion, that in many places he has not been able to attain to the ſtrength and ſublimity of the original which he copied.

I have authority to ſay, in the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Archibald Macnab, of the 88th regiment, or regiment of Highland Volunteers commanded by Colonel Campbell, that he has undoubted evidence of Mr. Macpherſon's collection being genuine, both from what he well remembers to have heard in his youth, and from his having heard very lately a conſiderable part of the poem of Temora rehearſed in the original, which agreed exactly with the printed verſion.

By the reverend Mr. Alexander Pope, miniſter of Reay, in the ſhire of Caithneſs, I am informed, that twenty-four years ago, he had begun to make a collection of ſome of the old poems current in his part of the country; on comparing which, with Mr. Macpherſon's work, he found in his collection the poem intitled, the Battle of Lora, ſome parts of Lathmon, and the account of the Death of Oſcar. From the above mentioned Lieutenant Duncan Macnicol, teſtimonies have been alſo received to a great part of Fingal, to part of Temora, and Carric-thura, as well as to the whole of Dar-thula, as recited in his preſence in the original, compared, and found to agree with the tranſlation.

I myſelf read over the greateſt part of the Engliſh verſion of the ſix books of Fingal, to Mr. Kenneth Macpherſon of Stornoway, in the iſland of Lewis, merchant, in preſence of the reverend Mr. Alexander Mac auly, chaplain to the 88th regiment. In going along, Mr. Macpherſon vouched what was read to be well known to him in the original, both the deſcriptions and the ſentiments. In ſome places, though he remembered the ſtory, he did not remember the words of the ori-

ginal; in other places, he remembered and repeated the Galic lines themſelves, which, being interpreted to me by Mr. Macaulay, were found, upon compariſon, to agree often literally with the printed verſion, and ſometimes with ſlight variations of a word or an epithet. This teſtimony carried to me, and muſt have carried to any other who had been preſent, the higheſt conviction; being preciſely a teſtimony of that nature which an Engliſhman well acquainted with Milton, or any favourite author, would give to a foreigner, who ſhewed him a verſion of this author into his own language, and wanted to be ſatisfied from what the Engliſhman could recollect of the original, whether it was really a tranſlation of Paradiſe Loſt, or a ſpurious work under that title which had been put into his hands.

The above mentioned Mr. Alexander Macaulay, Mr. Adam Ferguſſon, profeſſor of moral philoſophy, and Mr. Alexander Fraſer, governor to Francis Stuart, Eſq. inform me, that at ſeveral different times they were with Mr. Macpherſon, after he had returned from his journey through the Highlands, and whilſt he was employed in the work of tranſlating; that they looked into his manuſcripts, ſeveral of which had the appearance of being old; that they were fully ſatisfied of their being genuine Highland poems; that they compared the tranſlation in many places with the original: and they atteſt it to be very juſt and faithful, and remarkably literal.

It has been thought worth while to beſtow this attention on eſtabliſhing the authenticity of the works of Oſſian, now in poſſeſſion of the public: Becauſe whatever rank they are allowed to hold as works of genius; whatever different opinions may be entertained concerning their poetical merit, they are unqueſtionably valuable in another view; as monuments of the taſte and manners of an ancient age, as uſeful materials for enlarging our knowledge of the human mind and character; and muſt, beyond all diſpute, be held as at leaſt one of the greateſt curioſities, which have at any time

enriched the republic of letters. More teſtimonies to them might have been produced by a more enlarged correſpondence with the Highland countries: But I apprehend, if any apology is neceſſary, it is for producing ſo many names, in a queſtion, where the conſenting ſilence of a whole country, was to every unprejudiced perſon, the ſtrongeſt proof, that ſpurious compoſitions, in the name of that country, had not been obtruded upon the world.

THE preceding chain of evidence would be ſufficient one ſhould think, to ſettle any point of controverſy whatever. At leaſt we are in the habit of believing traditions in themſelves the moſt incredible, upon authority far leſs ſatisfactory. If additional proof is however wanted, we refer the reader to a Diſſertation on the Authenticity of Oſſian's Poems, inſerted by the Reverend Mr Smith, in his Galic Antiquities. This Gentleman has not only added his own teſtimony to the foregoing evidence, but has ſubjoined a numerous liſt of correſpondents, and of perſons to whom he was indebted "by oral recitation" for a conſiderable part of the originals of the poems which he has tranſlated, and which are intimately connected with the preſent collection. As it had been loudly demanded ‡, that the originals themſelves ſhould be produced, Mr. Smith has printed his Galic Poems in a quarto volume, extending to an hundred and ſeventy-four pages. If any reader can reſiſt the conviction of ſuch evidence, as to the exiſtence of Oſſian's Poems in the Galic language, he muſt be ranked with thoſe hardy ſceptics who would not believe, *though one had ariſen from the dead.*

‡ This paragraph is addreſſed, in particular, to the admirers of the late Dr Samuel Johnſon. For his petulance upon this ſubject, the hereditary ‖ diſtemper of lunacy forms a melancholy vindication. An apology of the ſame kind may be advanced for the buffoonery of James Boſwell, Eſq.

‖ "I HAD IT FROM MY FATHER."
Dr. Johnſon.

CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME FIRST.

	Page.
PREFACE, - - - - - - -	v
A DISSERTATION concerning the ÆRA and POEMS of OSSIAN,	1
A DISSERTATION concerning the POEMS of OSSIAN, - - - -	15
A CRITICAL DISSERTATION on the POEMS of OSSIAN, - - - -	45
APPENDIX, - - - - -	136
FINGAL, Book I. - - -	1
Book II. - -	16
Book III. - -	27
Book IV. - -	39
Book V. - -	50
Book VI. - -	60
COMALA, - - - - - - -	70
THE WAR OF CAROS,	76
WAR OF INIS-THONA,	83
BATTLE OF LORA, - -	89
CONLATH AND CUTHONA, - - - - - -	97

FINGAL & FILLAN, DISCOVERING CUTHULLIN.

"If 's the son of Semo; Gloomy and sad is the Hero."

Vide Fingal Book 6

Drawn by R.Corbould. Glasgow: Printed for James Imray. March 1799 Engraved by C.Warren Jun.r

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT EPIC POEM.

IN SIX BOOKS.

THE ARGUMENT.

Cuchullin, general of the Irish tribes, in the minority of Cormac, king of Ireland, sits in a lone beneath a tree, at the gate of Tura, a castle of Ulster (the other chiefs having gone on a hunting party to Cromla, a neighbouring hill,) is informed of the landing of Swaran, king of Lochlin, by Moran, the son of Fithil, one of his scouts. He convenes the chiefs; a council is held, and disputes run high about giving battle to the enemy. Connal, the petty king of Tongorma, and an intimate friend of Cuchullin, was for retreating, till Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the north-west coast of Scotland, whose aid had been previously solicited, should arrive; but Calmar, the son of Matha, lord of Lara, a country in Connaught, was for engaging the enemy immediately. Cuchullin, of himself willing to fight, went into the opinion of Calmar. Marching towards the enemy, he missed three of his bravest heroes, Fergus, Duchomar, and Cathbat. Fergus arriving, tells Cuchullin of the death of the two other chiefs; which introduces the affecting episode of Morna, the daughter of Cormac. The army of Cuchullin is descried at a distance by Swaran, who sent the son of Arno to observe the motions of the enemy, while he himself ranged his forces in order of battle. The son of Arno returning to Swaran, describes to him Cuchullin's chariot, and the terrible appearance of that hero. The armies engage, but night coming on, leaves the victory undecided. Cuchullin, according to the hospitality of the times, sends to Swaran a formal invitation to a feast, by his bard Carril, the son of Kinfena. Swaran refuses to come. Carril relates to Cuchullin the story of Grudar and Brasolis. A party, by Connal's advice, is sent to observe the enemy; which closes the action of the first day.

BOOK I.

CUCHULLIN † sat by Tura's wall; by the tree of the rustling leaf. His spear leaned against the mossy rock. His shield lay by him on the grass. As he thought

† Cuchullin, or rather Cuth-Ullin, 'the voice of Ullin,' a poetical name given the son of Semo, grandson to Carbre, a druid celebrated by the bards for his wisdom and valour, from his commanding the forces of the province of Ulster against the Firbolg or Belgæ, who were in possession of Connaught. Cuchullin, when very young, married Bragela, the daughter of Sorglan, and passing over into Ireland, lived for some time with Connal, grandson by a daughter to Cathbat the petty king of Ulster. His wisdom and valour in a short time raised him such reputation, that in the minority of Cormac the supreme king of Ireland, he was the chief guardian to the young king, and sole manager of the war against Swaran king of Lochlin. After a series of great actions he was killed in battle somewhere in Connaught, in the twenty-seventh year of his age. He was so remarkable for his strength, that to describe a strong man it has passed into a proverb, 'He has the strength of Cuchullin.' They shew the remains of his palace at Dunsciach in the Island of Skye; and a stone to which he bound his dog Luath, goes by his name.

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of mighty Cairbar †, a hero whom he ſlew in war; the ſcout ‖ of the ocean came, Moran ¶ the ſon of Fithil!

"Riſe," ſaid the youth, "Cuchullin, riſe; I ſee the ſhips of Swaran. Cuchullin, many are the foe; many the heroes of the dark-rolling ſea."

"Moran!" replied the blue-eyed chief, "thou ever trembleſt, ſon of Fithil: Thy fears have much increaſed the foe. Perhaps it is the king ‡ of the lonely hills coming to aid me on green Ullin's plains."

"I ſaw their chief," ſays Moran, "tall as a rock of ice. His ſpear is like that blaſted fir. His ſhield like the riſing moon. He ſat on a rock on the ſhore: his dark hoſt rolled, like clouds, around him. Many, chief of men! I ſaid, many are our hands of war. Well art thou named, the Mighty Man; but many mighty men are ſeen from Tura's windy walls."

"He anſwered, like a wave on a rock, who in this land appears like me? Heroes ſtand not in my preſence; they fall to earth beneath my hand. None can meet Swaran in the fight but Fingal, king of ſtormy hills. Once we wreſtled on the heath of Malmor*, and our heels overturned the wood. Rocks fell from their place; and rivulets, changing their courſe, fled murmouring from our ſtrife. Three days we renewed our ſtrife, and heroes ſtood at a diſtance and trembled. On the fourth, Fingal ſays, that the king of the ocean fell; but Swaran ſays he ſtood. Let dark Cuchullin yield to him that is ſtrong as the ſtorms of Malmor.

† Caibar or Cairbre, ſignifies a ſtrong man.

‖ We may conclude from Cuchullin's applying for foreign aid, that the Iriſh were not then ſo numerous as they have ſince been; which is a great preſumption againſt the high antiquities of that people. We have the teſtimony of Tacitus, that one legion only was thought ſufficient, in the time of Agricola, to reduce the whole iſland under the Roman yoke; which would not probably have been the caſe had the iſland been inhabited for the number of centuries before.

¶ Moran ſignifies many: and Fithil, or rather Fili, 'an inferior bard.'

‡ Fingal the ſon of Comhal and Mo[illegible] daughter of Thaddu. His grandfather was Trathal, and great-grandfather [illegible], both of whom are often mentioned in the poem. Trenmor, according to tradition, had two ſons; Trathal, who ſucceeded him in the kingdom of Morven, and Connar, called by the bards Connar the Great, who was elected king of Ireland, and was the anceſtor of that Connar who ſat on the Iriſh throne when the invaſion of Swaran happened. It may not be improper here to obſerve, that the [illegible] ought always to be placed [illegible] of Fingal.

* Mal-mor, 'a great hill.'

"No!" replied the blue-eyed chief, "I will never yield to man! Dark Cuchullin ſhall be great or dead! Go, Fithil's ſon, and take my ſpear. Strike the ſounding ſhield of Cabait†. It hangs at Tura's ruſtling gate; the ſound of peace is not its voice. My heroes ſhall hear on the hill."

He went and ſtruck the boſſy ſhield. The hills and their rocks replied. The ſound ſpread along the wood: deer ſtart by the lake of roes. Curach ‖ leapt from the ſounding rock; and Connal of the bloody ſpear. Crugal's ¶ breaſt of ſnow beats high. The ſon of Favi leaves the dark-brown hind. It is the ſhield of war, ſaid Ronnar! The ſpear of Cuchullin, ſaid Lugar! Son of the ſea put on thy arms! Calmar lift thy ſounding ſteel! Puno! dreadful hero, riſe! Cairbar from thy red tree of Cromla! Bend thy white knee, O Eth! and deſcend from the ſtreams of Lena. Ca-olt ſtretch thy white ſide as thou moveſt along the whiſtling heath of Mora: thy ſide that is white as the foam of the troubled ſea, when the dark winds pour it on the murmuring rocks of Cuthon*.

Now I behold the chiefs, in the pride of their former deeds! Their ſouls are kindled at the battles of old; and the actions of other times. Their eyes are like flames of fire. And roll in ſearch of the foes of the land. Their mighty hands are on their ſwords. And lightning pours from their ſides of ſteel. They come like ſtreams from the mountains; each ruſhes roaring from his hill. Bright are the chiefs of battle, in the armour of their fathers. Gloomy and dark their heroes follow, like the gathering of the rainy clouds behind the red meteors of heaven. The ſounds of craſhing arms aſcend. The gray dogs howl between. Unequally

† Cabait, or rather Cathbait, grandfather to the hero, was ſo remarkable for his valour, that his ſhield was made uſe of to alarm his poſterity to the battles of the family. We find Fingal making the ſame uſe of his own ſhield in the 4th book. A horn was the moſt common inſtrument to call the army together, before the invention of bagpipes.

‖ Cu-raoth ſignifies the [illegible] of battle.

¶ Cruth-geal 'fair com[illegible]ned.'

* Cuthon, 'the mourn[illegible]nd of waves.'

burſts the ſong of battle. And rocking Cromla‖ echoes round. On Lena's duſky heath they ſtand, like miſt¶ that ſhades the hills of autumn: when broken and dark it ſettles high, and lifts its head to heaven!

"Hail," ſaid Cuchullin, "ſons of the narrow vales! hail, ye hunters of the deer! Another ſport is drawing near: It is like the dark rolling of that wave on the coaſt! Shall we fight, ye ſons of war! or yield green Innis-fail† to Lochlin! O Connal‡ ſpeak thou firſt of men! thou breaker of the ſhields! thou haſt often fought with Lochlin: wilt thou lift thy father's ſpear?"

"Cuchullin!" calm the chief replied, "the ſpear of Connal is keen. It delights to ſhine in battle, and to mix with the blood of thouſands. But tho' my hand is bent on war, my heart is for the peace of Erin*. Behold, thou firſt in Cormac's war, the ſable fleet of Swaran. His maſts are as numerous on our coaſt as reeds in the lake of Lego. His ſhips are like foreſts clothed with miſt, when the trees yield by turns to the ſqually wind. Many are his chiefs in battle. Connal is for peace! Fingal would ſhun his arm, the firſt of mortal men! Fingal who ſcatters the mighty, as ſtormy winds the heath; when the ſtreams roar through echoing Cona: and night ſettles with all her clouds on the hill!"

"Fly, thou chief of peace," ſaid Calmar §, the ſon

‖ Cromleach ſignified a place of worſhip among the druids. It is here the proper name of a hill on the coaſt of Ullin or Ulſter.

¶ So when th' embattled clouds in dark array,
Along the ſkies their gloomy lines diſplay;
The low-hung vapours motionleſs and full
Reſt on the ſummit of the ſhaded hill. POPE.

† Ireland, ſo called from a colony that ſettled there called Falans. Innis-fail, i. e. the iſland of the Fa-il or Falans.

‡ Connal, the friend of Cuchullin, was the ſon of Caithbat prince of Tongorma, or the iſland of blue waves, probably one of the Hebrides. His mother was Fioncoma the daughter of Congal. He had a ſon by Foba of Conachar-neſſar, who was afterwards king of Ulſter. For his ſervices in the war againſt Swaran, he had lands conferred on him, which, from his name, were called Tir-chonnuil or Tirconnel, i. e. the land of Connal.

* Erin, a name of Ireland; from 'ear or iar' weſt, and 'in' an iſland. This name was not always confined to Ireland, for there is the higheſt probability that the Ierne of the ancients was Britain to the north of the Forth. For Ierne is ſaid to be the North of Britain, which could not be meant of Ireland.
Strabo, lib. 2. et 4. Caſaub. lib. 1.

§ Calm-er 'a ſtrong man'

of Matha; "fly, Connal, to thy ſilent hills, where the ſpear of battle never ſhone! Purſue the dark-brown deer of Cromla: and ſtop with thine arrows the bounding roes of Lena. But, blue-eyed ſon of Semo, Cuchullin, ruler of the war, ſcatter thou the ſons of Lochlin‖! and roar thro' the ranks of their pride. Let no veſſel of the kingdom of Snow bound on the dark rolling waves of Iniſtore†. O ye dark winds of Erin riſe! roar ye whirlwinds of the heath! Amidſt the tempeſt let me die, torn in a cloud by angry ghoſts of men; amidſt the tempeſt let Calmar die, if ever chaſe was ſport to him, ſo much as the battle of ſhields!"

"Calmar!" ſlow replied the chief, "I never fled, O ſon of Matha! I was ſwift with my friends in battle; but ſmall is the fame of Connal! The battle was won in my preſence; and the valiant overcame! But, ſon of Semo, hear my voice, regard the ancient throne of Cormac. Give wealth and half the land for peace, till Fingal come with battle. Or, if war be thy choice, I lift the ſword and ſpear. My joy ſhall be in the midſt of thouſands; and my ſoul brighten in the gloom of the fight!"

"To me," Cuchullin replies, "pleaſant is the noiſe of arms! pleaſant as the thunder of heaven before the ſhower of ſpring! But gather all the ſhining tribes, that I may view the ſons of war! Let them move along the heath, bright as the ſun-ſhine before a ſtorm; when the weſt wind collects the clouds, and the oaks of Morven echo along the ſhore."

"But where are my friends in battle? The companions of my arm in danger? Where art thou, white-boſom'd Cathbat? Where is that cloud in war, Duchômar‡? And haſt thou left me, O Fergus*! in the day of the ſtorm? Fergus, firſt in our joy at the feaſt! ſon of Roſſa! arm of death! comeſt thou like a roe¶ from

‖ The Gallic name of Scandinavia in general; in a more confined ſenſe that of the peninſula of Jutland.

† Iniſtore, 'the iſland of whales,' the ancient name of the Orkney iſlands.

‡ Dubhcomar, 'a black well-ſhaped man.'

* Fear-guth, 'the man of the word;' or a commander of an army.

¶ Be thou like a roe or young hart on the mountains of Bether. Solomon's Song.

Malmor? Like a hart from the echoing hills? Hail, thou ſon of Roſſa! What ſhades the ſoul of war?"

"Four ſtones†" replied the chief, "riſe on the grave of Câthbat. Theſe hands have laid in earth Duchômar, that cloud in war! Câthbat, the ſon of Torman; thou wert a ſun-beam on the hill. And thou, O valiant Duchômar, like the miſt of marſhy Lano; when it ſails over the plains of autumn and brings death to the people. Morna, faireſt of maids! calm is thy ſleep in the cave of the rock. Thou haſt fallen in darkneſs like a ſtar, that ſhoots acroſs the deſart, when the traveller is alone, and mourns the tranſient beam."

"Say," ſaid Semo's blue-eyed ſon, "ſay how fell the chiefs of Erin? Fell they by the ſons of Lochlin, ſtriving in the battle of heroes? Or what confines the chiefs of Cromla to the dark and narrow houſe‖"

"Câthbat," replied the hero, "fell by the ſword of Duchômar at the oak of the noiſy ſtreams. Duchômar came to Tura's cave; and ſpoke to the lovely Morna."

"Morna¶, faireſt among women, lovely daughter of Cormac-cairbar. Why in the circle of ſtones; in the cave of the rock alone? The ſtream murmurs hoarſely. The old trees groan in the wind. The lake is troubled before thee, and dark are the clouds of the ſky. But thou art like ſnow on the heath; and thy hair like the miſt of Cromla; when it curls on the rocks, and ſhines to the beam of the weſt. Thy breaſts are like two ſmooth rocks ſeen from Brano of the ſtreams; thy arms like two white pillars in the halls of the mighty Fingal."

"From whence," the white-armed maid replied, "from whence, Duchômar, the moſt gloomy of men?

† This paſſage alludes to the manner of burial among the ancient Scots. They opened a grave ſix or eight feet deep: the bottom was lined with fine clay; and on this they laid the body of the deceaſed, and, if a warrior, his ſword, and the heads of twelve arrows by his ſide. Above they laid another ſtratum of clay, in which they placed the horn of a deer, the ſymbol of hunting. The whole was covered with a fine mold, and four ſtones placed on end to mark the extent of the grave. Theſe are the four ſtones alluded to here.

‖ The grave. The houſe appointed for all living. JOB.

¶ Mairne, or Morna, 'a woman beloved by all.'

Dark are thy brows and terrible. Red are thy rolling eyes. Does Swaran appear on the ſea? What of the foe, Duchômar?"

"From the hill I return, O Morna, from the hill of the dark-brown hinds. Three have I ſlain with my bended yew. Three with my long bounding dogs of the chaſe. Lovely daughter of Cormac, I love thee as my ſoul. I have ſlain one ſtately deer for thee. High was his branchy head; and fleet his feet of wind."

"Duchômar!" calm the maid replied, "I love thee not, thou gloomy man, hard is thy heart of rock; and dark thy terrible brow. But Câthbat, ſon of Torman†, thou art the love of Morna. Thou art like a ſun beam on the hill in the day of the gloomy ſtorm. Saweſt thou the ſon of Torman, lovely on the hill of his hinds? Here the daughter of Cormac waits the coming of Câthbat."

"And long ſhall Morna wait," Duchômar ſaid, "his blood is on my ſword. Long, ſhall Morna wait for him. He fell at Brano's ſtream. High on Cromla I will raiſe his tomb, daughter of Cormac-cairbar; but fix thy love on Duchômar, his arm is ſtrong as a ſtorm."

"And is the ſon of Torman fallen?" ſaid the maid of the tearful eye. "Is he fallen on his echoing heath; the youth with the breaſt of ſnow? he that was firſt in the chaſe of the hill? the foe of the ſtrangers of the ocean? Duchômar thou art dark‖ indeed, and cruel is thy arm to Morna. But give me that ſword, my foe! I love the blood of Câthbat."

He gave the ſword to her tears. But ſhe pierced his manly breaſt! He fell, like the bank of a mountain-ſtream; and ſtretching out his arm he ſaid—

"Daughter of Cormac-cairbar, thou haſt ſlain Duchômar. The ſword is cold in my breaſt: Morna, I feel it cold. Give me to Moina¶ the maid; Duchômar was the dream of her night. She will raiſe my

† Torman, 'thunder.' This is the true origin of the Jupiter Taranis of the ancients.

‖ She alludes to his name, the dark man.

¶ Moina, 'ſoft in temper and perſon.'

tomb; and the hunter ſhall ſee it and praiſe me. But draw the ſword from my breaſt, Morna, the ſteel is cold."

She came, in all her tears, ſhe came, and drew it from his breaſt. He pierced her white ſide with ſteel; and ſpread her fair locks on the ground. Her burſting blood ſounds from her ſide: And her white arm is ſtained with red. Rolling in death ſhe lay, and Tura's cave anſwered to her groans.

"Peace," ſaid Cuchullin, "to the ſouls of the heroes; their deeds were great in danger. Let them ride around† me on clouds; and ſhew their features of war; that my ſoul may be ſtrong in danger: my arm like the thunder of heaven.—But be thou on a moon-beam, O Morna, near the window of my reſt; when my thoughts are of peace; and the din of arms is over.—Gather the ſtrength of the tribes, and move to the wars of Erin—Attend the car of my battles; rejoice in the noiſe of my courſe. Place three ſpears by my ſide; follow the bounding of my ſteeds; that my ſoul may be ſtrong in my friends, when the battle darkens round the beams of my ſteel."

As ruſhes a ſtream‖ of foam from the dark ſhady ſteep of Cromla; when the thunder is rolling above, and dark-brown night reſts on half the hill. So fierce, ſo vaſt, ſo terrible ruſhed on the ſons of Erin. The chief like a whale of ocean, whom all his billows follow, poured valour forth as a ſtream, rolling his might along the ſhore.

The ſons of Lochlin heard the noiſe as the ſound of a winter-ſtream. Swaran ſtruck his boſſy ſhield, and called the ſon of Arno. "What murmur rolls along the hill like the gathered flies of evening? The ſons of In-

† It was the opinion then, as indeed it is to this day, of ſome of the Highlanders, that the ſouls of the deceaſed hovered round their living friends; and ſometimes appeared to them when they were about to enter on any great undertaking.

‖ As torrents roll increas'd by numerous rills
With rage impetuous down the echoing hills;
Ruſh to the vales, and pour'd along the plain,
Bear thro' a thouſand channels to the main. POPE.

nis-fail deſcend, or ruſtling winds roar in the diſtant wood. Such is the noiſe of Gormal before the white tops of my waves ariſe. O ſon of Arno, aſcend the hill and view the dark face of the heath."

He went, and trembling, ſwift returned. His eyes rolled widely round. His heart beat high againſt his ſide. His words were faultering, broken, ſlow.

"Riſe, ſon of ocean, riſe chief of the dark-brown ſhields, I ſee the dark, the mountain-ſtream of the battle: the deep-moving ſtrength of the ſons of Erin.—The car, the car of battle comes, like the flame of death; the rapid car of Cuchullin, the noble ſon of Semo. It bends behind like a wave near a rock; like the golden miſt of the heath. Its ſides are emboſſed with ſtones, and ſparkle like the ſea round the boat of night. Of poliſhed yew is its beam, and its ſeat of the ſmootheſt bone. The ſides are repleniſhed with ſpears; and the bottom is the footſtool of heroes. Before the right ſide of the car is ſeen the ſnorting horſe. The high-maned, broad-breaſted, proud, high-leaping, ſtrong ſteed of the hill. Loud and reſounding is his hoof; the ſpreading of his mane above is like that ſtream of ſmoke on the heath. Bright are the ſides of the ſteed, and his name is Sulin-Sifadda.

"Before the left ſide of the car is ſeen the ſnorting horſe. The dark-maned, high-headed, ſtrong-hoofed, fleet, bounding ſon of the hill: his name is Duſronnal among the ſtormy ſons of the ſword. A thouſand thongs bind the car on high Hard poliſhed bits ſhine in a wreath of foam. Thin thongs bright-ſtudded with gems, bend on the ſtately necks of the ſteeds. The ſteeds that like wreaths of miſt fly over the ſtreamy vales. The wildneſs of deer is in their courſe, the ſtrength of the eagle deſcending on her prey. Their noiſe is like the blaſt of winter on the ſides of the ſnow-headed Gormal†

"Within the car is ſeen the chief; the ſtrong ſtormy

† A hill of Lochlin.

ſon of the ſword; the hero's name is Cuchullin, ſon of Semo, king of ſhells. His red cheek is like my poliſhed yew. The look of his blue-rolling eye is wide beneath the dark arch of his brow. His hair flies from his head like a flame, as bending forward he wields the ſpear. Fly, king of ocean, fly; he comes, like a ſtorm along the ſtreamy vale."

"When did I fly," replied the king, "from the battle of many ſpears? When did I fly, ſon of Arno, chief of the little ſoul? I met the ſtorm of Gormal when the foam of my waves was high; I met the ſtorm of the clouds, and ſhall I fly from a hero? Were it Fingal himſelf, my ſoul ſhould not darken before him.—Riſe to the battle, my thouſands; pour round me like the echoing main. Gather round the bright ſteel of your king; ſtrong as the rocks of my land; that meet the ſtorm with joy, and ſtretch their dark woods to the wind."

As autumn's† dark ſtorms pour from two echoing hills, towards each other approached the heroes.—As two dark ſtreams from high rocks meet, and mix and roar on the plain; loud, rough and dark in battle meet Lochlin and Innis-fail. Chief mixes his ſtrokes with chief, and man with man; ſteel, clanging, ſounded on ſteel, helmets are cleft on high. Blood burſts and ſmokes around.—Strings twang on the poliſhed yews. Darts ruſh along the ſky. Spears fall like the circles of light that gild the ſtormy face of night.

As the troubled noiſe of the ocean when roll the waves on high: as the laſt peal of the thunder of heaven, ſuch is the noiſe of battle. Though Cormac's hundred bards were there to give the war to ſong; feeble were the

† The reader may compare this paſſage with a ſimilar one in Homer. Iliad 4. v. 446.

Now ſhield with ſhield, with helmet helmet clos'd,
To armour armour, lance to lance oppos'd.
Hoſt againſt hoſt, with ſhadowy ſquadrons drew,
The ſounding darts in iron tempeſts flew,
With ſtreaming blood the ſlipp'ry fields are dy'd,
And ſlaughter'd heroes ſwell the dreadful tide. POPE.

Arms to armour crashing, bray'd
Horrible diſcord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots rag'd, &c. MILTON.

voices of an hundred bards to ſend the death to future times. For many were the falls of the heroes; and wide poured the blood of the valiant.

Mourn, ye ſons of ſong, the death of the noble Sithallin†. Let the ſighs of Fiona riſe on the dark heaths of her lovely Ardan. They fell, like two hinds of the deſart, by the hands of the mighty Swaran; when, in the midſt of thouſands he roared; like the ſhrill ſpirit of a ſtorm, that ſits dim, on the clouds of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner.

Nor ſlept thy hand by thy ſide, chief of the iſle of miſt‖, many were the deaths of thine arm, Cuchullin, thou ſon of Semo. His ſword was like the beam of heaven when it pierces the ſons of the vale; when the people are blaſted and fall, and all the hills are burning around. Dufronnal¶ ſnorted over the bodies of heroes; and Sifadda* bathed his hoof in blood. The battle lay behind them as groves overturned on the deſart of Cromla; when the blaſt has paſſed the heath laden with the ſpirits of night.

Weep on the rocks of roaring winds, O maid of Iniſtore‡, bend thy fair head over the waves, thou fairer than the ſpirit of the hills; when it moves in a ſunbeam at noon over the ſilence of Morven. He is fallen! thy youth is low; pale beneath the ſword of Cuchullin. No more ſhall valour raiſe the youth to match the blood of kings. Trenar, lovely Trenar died, thou maid of Iniſtore. His gray dogs are howling at home, and ſee his paſſing ghoſt. His bow is in the hall unſtrung. No ſound is in the heath of his hinds.

† Sithallin ſignifies a handſome man: Fiona, 'a fair maid;' and Ardan, 'pride.'

‖ The Iſle of Sky; not improperly called the Iſle of Miſt, as its high hills, which catch the clouds from the weſtern ocean, occaſion almoſt continual rains.

¶ One of Cuchullin's horſes. Dubhſtron-gheal.

* Sith-fadda, i.e. a long-ſtride.

‡ The maid of Iniſtore was the daughter of Gorlo king of Iniſtore or Orkney iſlands. Trenar was brother to the king of Iniſcon, ſuppoſed to be one of the iſlands of Shetland. The Orkneys and Shetland were at that time ſubject to the king of Lochlin. We find that the dogs of Trenar are ſenſible at home of the death of their maſter, the very inſtant he is killed. It was the opinion of the times, that the ſouls of heroes went immediately after death to the hills of their country, and the ſcenes they frequented the moſt happy time of their life. It was thought too that dogs and horſes ſaw the ghoſts of the deceaſed.

As roll a thouſand waves on a rock, ſo Swaran's hoſt came on; as meets a rock a thouſand waves, ſo Inniſfail met Swaran. Death raiſes all his voices around, and mixes with the ſound of their ſhields. Each hero is a pillar of darkneſs, and the ſword a beam of fire in his hand. The field echoes from wing to wing, as a hundred hammers that riſe by turns on the red ſon of the furnace.

Who are theſe on Lena's heath that are ſo gloomy and dark? Who are theſe like two clouds†, and their ſwords like lightning above them? The little hills are troubled around, and the rocks tremble with all their moſs. Who is it but Ocean's ſon and the car-borne chief of Erin? Many are the anxious eyes of their friends, as they ſee them dim on the heath. Now night conceals the chief in her clouds, and ends the terrible fight.

It was on Cromla's ſhaggy ſide that Dorglas placed the deer‖; the early fortune of the chaſe, before the heroes left the hill. A hundred youths collect the heath; ten heroes blow the fire; three hundred chuſe the poliſh'd ſtones. The feaſt is ſmoking wide.

Cuchullin, chief of Erin's war, reſum'd his mighty ſoul. He ſtood upon his beamy ſpear, and ſpoke to the ſon of ſongs; to Carril of other times, the gray-haired ſon of Kinſena¶. "Is this feaſt ſpread for me alone; and the king of Lochlin on Ullin's ſhore, far from the deer of his hills, and ſounding halls of his feaſts! Riſe, Carril of other times, and carry my words to Swaran; tell him that came from the roaring of waters, that Cuchullin gives his feaſt. Here let him liſten to the ſound

† As when two black clouds
With heaven's artillery fraught, comes rattling on
Over the Caſpian. MILTON.

‖ The ancient manner of preparing feaſts after hunting, is handed down by tradition. A pit lined with ſmooth ſtones was made; and near it ſtood a heap of ſmooth flat ſtones of the flint kind. The ſtones, as well as the pit, were properly heated with heath. Then they laid ſome veniſon in the bottom, and a ſtratum of the ſtones above it; and thus they did alternately till the pit was full. The whole was covered over with heath to confine the ſteam. Whether this is probable I cannot ſay; but ſome pits are ſhewn, which the vulgar ſay were uſed in that manner.

¶ Ceann-feana, i. e. the head of the people.

of my groves amidſt the clouds of night. For cold and bleak the bluſtering winds ruſh over the foam of his ſeas. Here let him praiſe the trembling harp, and hear the ſongs of heroes."

Old Carril went, with ſofteſt voice, and called the king of dark brown ſhields. "Riſe from the ſkins of thy chaſe, riſe, Swaran king of groves. Cuchullin gives the joy of ſhells; partake the feaſt of Erin's blue-eyed chief." He anſwered like the ſullen ſound of Cromla before a ſtorm. "Though all thy daughters, Innis-fail! ſhould extend their arms of ſnow; raiſe high the heavings of their breaſts, and ſoftly roll their eyes of love; yet, fixed as Lochlin's thouſand rocks, here Swaran ſhall remain; till morn, with the young beams of the eaſt, ſhall light me to the death of Cuchullin. Pleaſant to my ear is Lochlin's wind. It ruſhes over my ſeas. It ſpeaks aloft in all my ſhrouds, and brings my green foreſts to my mind; the green foreſts of Gormal that often echoed to my winds, when my ſpear was red in the chaſe of the boar. Let dark Cuchullin yield to me the ancient throne of Cormac; or Erin's torrents ſhall ſhew from their hills the red foam of the blood of his pride."

"Sad is the ſound of Swaran's voice," ſaid Carril of other times: "Sad to himſelf alone," ſaid the blue-eyed ſon of Semo. "But, Carril, raiſe thy voice on high, and tell the deeds of other times. Send thou the night away in ſong; and give the joy of grief. For many heroes and maids of love have moved on Innis-fail. And lovely are the ſongs of wo that are heard on Albion's rocks; when the noiſe of the chaſe is over, and the ſtreams of Cona anſwer to the voice of Oſſian †."

"In other days ‖," Carril replies, "came the ſons

† Oſſian the ſon of Fingal and author of the Poem. One cannot but admire the addreſs of the poet in putting his own praiſe ſo naturally into the mouth of Cuchullin. The Cona here mentioned is perhaps that ſmall river that runs through Glenco in Argyleſhire. One of the hills which environ that romantic valley is ſtill called Scorna-ſena, or the hill of Fingal's people.

‖ This epiſode is introduced with propriety. Calmar and Connal, two of the

of Ocean to Erin. A thouſand veſſels bounded over the waves to Ullin's lovely plains. The ſons of Innisfail aroſe to meet the race of dark brown ſhields. Cairbar, firſt of men was there, and Grudar ſtately youth. Long had they ſtrove for the ſpotted bull, that lowed on Golbun's ‖ echoing heath. Each claimed him as his own; and death was often at the point of their ſteel. Side by ſide the heroes fought, and the ſtrangers of Ocean fled. Whoſe name was fairer on the hill than the name of Cairbar and Grudar? But ah! why ever lowed the bull on Golbun's echoing heath? They ſaw him leaping like the ſnow. The wrath of the chiefs returned."

"On Lubar's ¶ graſſy banks they fought, and Grudar like a ſun-beam, fell. Fierce Cairbar came to the vale of the echoing Tura, where Braſſolis †, faireſt of his ſiſters, all alone, raiſed the ſong of grief. She ſung of the actions of Grudar, the youth of her ſecret ſoul. She mourned him in the field of blood: But ſtill ſhe hoped for his return. Her white boſom is ſeen from her robe, as the moon from the clouds of night. Her voice was ſofter than the harp to raiſe the ſong of grief. Her ſoul was fixed on Grudar; the ſecret look of her eye was his. When ſhalt thou come in thine arms, thou mighty in the war?"

"Take, Braſſolis," Cairbar came and ſaid, "take, Braſſolis, this ſhield of blood. Fix it on high within my hall, the armour of my foe." Her ſoft heart beat againſt her ſide. Diſtracted, pale, ſhe flew. She found her youth in all his blood! ſhe died on Cromla's heath. Here reſts their duſt, Cuchullin; and theſe two lonely yews, ſprung from their tombs, wiſh to meet on high. Fair was Braſſolis on the plain, and Grudar on the hill.

Iriſh heroes, had diſputed warmly before the battle about engaging the enemy. Carril endeavours to reconcile them with the ſtory of Cairbar and Grudar; who though enemies before, fought ſide by ſide in the war. The poet obtained his aim, for we find Cairbar and Connal perfectly reconciled in the third book.

‖ Golb-bheun, as well as Cromleach, ſignifies a crooked hill. It is here the name of a mountain in the county of Sligo.

¶ Lubar, a river in Ulſter. Labhar, 'loud, noiſy.'

† Braſſolis ſignifies a woman with a white breaſt.

The bard ſhall preſerve their names, and repeat them to future times."

"Pleaſant is thy voice, O Carril," ſaid the blue-eyed chief of Erin. "Lovely are the words of other times. They are like the calm ſhower † of ſpring, when the ſun looks on the field, and the light cloud flies over the hills. O ſtrike the harp in praiſe of my love, the lonely ſun-beam of Dunſcaich. Strike the harp in the praiſe of Bragela ‖, of her that I left in the iſle of Miſt, the ſpouſe of Semo's ſon. Doſt thou raiſe thy fair face from the rock to find the ſails of Cuchullin? The ſea is rolling far diſtant, and its white foam ſhall deceive thee for my ſails. Retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds ſigh in thy hair. Retire to the halls of my feaſts, and think of the times that are paſt: for I will not return till the ſtorm of war is ceaſed. O Connal, ſpeak of wars and arms, and ſend her from my mind, for lovely with her raven-hair is the white-boſomed daughter of Sorglan."

Connal, ſlow to ſpeak, replied, "Guard againſt the race of Ocean. Send thy troop of night abroad, and watch the ſtrength of Swaran. Cuchullin! I am for peace till the race of the deſert come; till Fingal come, the firſt of men, and beam, like the ſun, on our fields."

The hero ſtruck the ſhield of his alarms; the warriors of the night moved on. The reſt lay in the heath of the deer, and ſlept amidſt the duſky wind. The ghoſts ¶ of the lately dead were near, and ſwam on gloomy clouds. And far diſtant, in the dark ſilence of Lena, the feeble voices were heard.

† But when he ſpeaks, what elocution flows!
Like the ſoft fleeces of deſcending ſnows. POPE.

‖ Bragela was the daughter of Sorglan, and the wife of Cuchullin. Cuchullin, upon the death of Artho, ſupreme king of Ireland, paſſed over into Ireland, probably by Fingal's order, to take upon him the adminiſtration of affairs in that kingdom during the minority of Cormac the ſon of Artho. He left his wife Bragela in Dunſcaich, the ſeat of the family, in the iſle of Sky.

¶ It was long the opinion of the ancient Scots, that a ghoſt was heard ſhrieking near the place where a death was to happen ſoon after. The accounts given to this day, among the vulgar, of this extraordinary matter, are very poetical. The ghoſt comes mounted on a meteor, and furrounds twice or thrice the place deſtined for the perſon to die; and then goes along the road through which the funeral is to paſs, ſhrieking at intervals; at laſt, the meteor and ghoſt diſappear above the burial place.

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT
EPIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

The ghoſt of Crugal, one of the Iriſh heroes who was killed in battle, appearing to Connal, foretels the defeat of Cuchullin in the next battle; and earneſtly adviſes him to make peace with Swaran. Connal communicates the viſion; but Cuchullin is inflexible; from a principle of honour he would not be the firſt to ſue for peace, and he reſolved to continue the war. Morning comes: Swaran propoſes diſhonourable terms to Cuchullin, which are rejected. The battle begins, and is obſtinately fought for ſome time, until, upon the flight of Grumal, the whole Iriſh army give way. Cuchullin and Connal cover their retreat: Carril leads them to a neighbouring hill, whither they are ſoon followed by Cuchullin himſelf, who deſcribes the fleet of Fingal making towards the coaſt: but night coming on, he loſt ſight of it again. Cuchullin, dejected after his defeat, attributes his ill ſucceſs to the death of Ferda his friend, whom he had killed ſome time before. Carril, to ſhew that ill ſucceſs did not always attend thoſe who innocently killed their friends, introduces the epiſode of Comal and Galvina.

BOOK II.

CONNAL † lay by the ſound of the mountain-ſtream, beneath the aged tree. A ſtone, with its moſs, ſupported his head. Shrill through the heath of Lena, he

† The ſcene of Connal's repoſe is familiar to thoſe who have been in the Highlands of Scotland. The poet removes him to a diſtance from the army, to add more horror to the deſcription of Crugal's ghoſt by the lonelineſs of the place. It perhaps will not be diſagreeable to the reader, to ſee how two other ancient poets handled a ſimilar ſubject.

When lo! the ſhade, before his cloſing eyes,
Of ſad Patroclus roſe or ſeem'd to riſe,
In the ſame robe he living wore, he came
In ſtature, voice, and pleaſing look the ſame.
The form familiar hover'd o'er his head,
And ſleeps Achilles thus? the phantom ſaid. POPE.

When Hector's ghoſt before my ſight appears:
A bloody ſhroud he ſeem'd, and bath'd in tears.
Such as he was, when, by Pelides ſlain,
Theſſalian courſers dragg'd him o'er the plain.
Swol'n were his feet, as when the thongs were thruſt
Through the bor'd holes, his body black with duſt.
Unlike that Hector, who return'd from toils
Of war triumphant, in Æacian ſpoils:
Or him, who made the fainting Greeks retire,
And launch'd againſt their navy Phrygian fire.
His hair and beard ſtood ſtiffen'd with his gore;
And all the wounds he for his country bore. DRYDEN.

SUL-MALLA & CATHDIOR.
Vide Temora.

Glasgow: Printed for James Imray, March. 1799.

heard the voice of night. At diſtance from the heroes he lay, for the ſon of the ſword feared no foe.

My hero ſaw in his reſt a dark-red ſtream of fire coming down from the hill. Crugal ſat upon the beam, a chief that lately fell. He fell by the hand of Swaran, ſtriving in the battle of heroes His face is like the beam of the ſetting moon; his robes are of the clouds of the hill: his eyes are like two decaying flames. Dark is the wound of his breaſt.

"Crugal," ſaid the mighty Connal, "ſon of Dedgal famed on the hill of the deer. Why ſo pale and ſad, thou breaker of the ſhields? Thou haſt never been pale for fear. What diſturbs the ſon of the hill?"

Dim, and in tears, he ſtood and ſtretched his pale hand over the hero. Faintly he raiſed his feeble voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego.

"My ghoſt, O Connal, is on my native hills; but my corſe is on the ſands of Ullin. Thou ſhalt never talk with Crugal, or find his lone ſteps in the heath. I am light as the blaſt of Cromla, and I move like the ſhadow of miſt. Connal, ſon of Colgar †, I ſee the dark cloud of death: it hovers over the plains of Lena. The ſons of green Erin ſhall fall Remove from the field of ghoſts." Like the darkened moon ‖ he retired, in the midſt of the whiſtling blaſt.

"Stay," ſaid the mighty Connal, "ſtay my dark-red friend. Lay by that beam of heaven, ſon of the windy Cromla. What cave of the hill is thy lonely houſe? What green-headed hill is the place of thy reſt? Shall we not hear thee in the ſtorm? in the noiſe of the mountain-ſtream? When the feeble ſons of the wind come forth, and ride on the blaſt of the deſert?"

The ſoft-voiced Connal roſe in the midſt of his ſounding arms. He ſtruck his ſhield above Cuchullin. The ſon of battle waked.

† Connal the ſon of Caithbat, the friend of Cuchullin, is ſometimes, as here, called the ſon of Colgar; from one of that name who was the founder of his family

‖ Like a thin ſmoke he ſees the ſpirit fly:
And hears a feeble, lamentable cry POPE.

"Why," ſaid the ruler of the car, "comes Connal, through the night? My ſpear might turn againſt the ſound; and Cuchullin mourn the death of his friend. Speak, Connal, ſon of Colgar, ſpeak, thy counſel is like the ſun of heaven."

"Son of Semo," replied the chief, "the ghoſt of Crugal came from the cave of his hill. The ſtars dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was like the ſound of a diſtant ſtream. He is a meſſenger of death. He ſpeaks of the dark and narrow houſe. Sue for peace, O chief of Dunſcaich; or fly over the heath of Lena."

"He ſpoke to Connal," replied the hero, "though ſtars dim-twinkled through his form. Son of Colgar, it was the wind that murmured in the caves of Lena. Or if it was the form‖ of Crugal, why didſt thou not force him to my ſight? Haſt thou enquired where is his cave? The houſe of the ſon of the wind? My ſword might find that voice, and force his knowledge from him. And ſmall is his knowledge, Connal, for he was here to-day. He could not have gone beyond our hills, and who can tell him there of our death?"

"Ghoſts fly on clouds and ride on winds," ſaid Connal's voice of wiſdom. "They reſt together in their caves, and talk of mortal men."

"Then let them talk of mortal men; of every man but Erin's chief. Let me be forgot in their cave; for I will not fly from Swaran. If I muſt fall, my tomb ſhall riſe amidſt the fame of future times. The hunter ſhall ſhed a tear on my ſtone; and ſorrow dwell round the high-boſomed Bragela. I fear not death, but I fear to fly, for Fingal ſaw me often victorious. Thou dim phantom of the hill, ſhew thyſelf to me! come on thy beam of heaven, and ſhew me my death in thine hand;

‖ The poet teaches us the opinions that prevailed in his time concerning the ſtate of ſeparate ſouls. From Connal's expreſſion, "That the ſtars dim-twinkled through the form of Crugal," and Cuchullin's reply, we may gather that they both thought the ſoul was material: ſomething like the εἴδωλον of the ancient Greeks.

yet will I not fly, thou feeble ſon of the wind. Go, ſon of Colgar, ſtrike the ſhield of Caithbat, it hangs between the ſpears. Let my heroes riſe to the ſound in the midſt of the battles of Erin. Though Fingal delays his coming with the race of the ſtormy hills; we ſhall fight, O Colgar's ſon, and die in the battle of heroes."

The ſound ſpreads wide; the heroes riſe, like the breaking of a blue-rolling wave. They ſtood on the heath, like oaks with all their branches round them †; when they echo to the ſtream of froſt, and their withered leaves ruſtle to the wind.

High Cromla's head of clouds is gray; the morning trembles on the half enlightened ocean. The blue, gray miſt ſwims ſlowly by, and hides the ſons of Innisfail.

"Riſe ye," ſaid the king of the dark-brown ſhields, "ye that came from Lochlin's waves. The ſons of Erin have fled from our arms—purſue them over the plains of Lena. And Morla, go to Cormac's hall and bid them yield to Swaran; before the people ſhall fall into the tomb; and the hills of Ullin be ſilent." They roſe like a flock of ſea fowl when the waves expel them from the ſhore. Their ſound was like a thouſand ſtreams that meet in Cona's vale, when after a ſtormy night, they turn their dark eddies beneath the pale light of the morning.

As the dark ſhades of autumn fly over the hills of graſs; ſo gloomy, dark, ſucceſſive came the chiefs of Lochlin's echoing woods. Tall as the ſtag of Morven moved on the king of groves. His ſhining ſhield is on his ſide like a flame on the heath at night, when the world is ſilent and dark, and the traveller ſees ſome ghoſt ſporting in the beam.

A blaſt from the troubled ocean removed the ſettled

† As when heav'n's fire
Hath ſcath'd the foreſt oaks, or mountain pines
With ſinged tops, their ſtately growth tho' bare
Stand on the blaſted heath. MILTON.

miſt. The ſons of Innis-fail appear like a ridge of rocks on the ſhore.

"Go, Morla, go," ſaid Lochlin's king, "and offer peace to theſe. Offer the terms we give to kings when nations bow before us. When the valiant are dead in war, and the virgins weeping on the field."

Great Morla came, the ſon of Swarth, and ſtately ſtrode the king of ſhields. He ſpoke to Erin's blue-eyed ſon, among the leſſer heroes.

"Take Swaran's peace," the warrior ſpoke, "the peace he gives to kings, when the nations bow before him. Leave Ullin's lovely plains to us, and give thy ſpouſe and day. Thy ſpouſe high-boſom'd heaving fair. Thy dog that overtakes the wind. Give theſe to prove the weakneſs of thine arm, and live beneath our power."

"Tell Swaran, tell that heart of pride, that Cuchullin never yields. I give him the dark-blue rolling of ocean, or I give his people graves in Erin! Never ſhall a ſtranger have the lovely ſun-beam of Dunſcaich; nor ever deer fly on Lochlin's hills before the nimble-footed Luath."

"Vain ruler of the car," ſaid Morla, "wilt thou fight the king; that king whoſe ſhips of many groves could carry off thine Iſle? So little is thy green-hilled Ullin to the king of ſtormy waves."

"In words I yield to many, Morla, but this ſword ſhall yield to none. Erin ſhall own the ſway of Cormac, while Connal and Cuchullin live. O Connal, firſt of mighty men, thou haſt heard the words of Morla; ſhall thy thoughts then be of peace, thou breaker of the ſhields! Spirit of fallen Crugal! why didſt thou threaten us with death! The narrow houſe ſhall receive me in the midſt of the light of renown. Exalt, ye ſons of Innis-fail, exalt the ſpear and bend the bow; ruſh on the foe in darkneſs, as the ſpirits of ſtormy nights."

Then diſmal, roaring, fierce, and deep the gloom of battle rolled along; as miſt ¶ that is poured on the val-

¶ As evening miſt
Ris'n from a river o'er the mariſh glides
And gathers ground faſt at the lab'rer's heel
Homeward returning. MILTON.

ley, when ſtorms invade the ſilent ſun-ſhine of heaven. The chief moves before in arms, like an angry ghoſt before a cloud; when meteors incloſe him with fire; and the dark winds are in his hand. Carril, far on the heath, bids the horn of battle ſound. He raiſes the voice of the ſong, and pours his ſoul into the minds of heroes.

"Where," ſaid the mouth of the ſong, "where is the fallen Crugal? He lies forgot on earth, and the hall of ſhells † is ſilent. Sad is the ſpouſe of Crugal, for ſhe is a ſtranger ‖ in the hall of her ſorrow. But who is ſhe, that, like a ſun beam, flies before the ranks of the foe? It is Degrena ¶, lovely fair, the ſpouſe of fallen Crugal. Her hair is on the wind behind. Her eye is red; her voice is ſhrill. Green, empty is thy Crugal now, his form is in the cave of the hill. He comes to the ear of reſt, and raiſes his feeble voice; like the humming of the mountain-bee, or collected flies of evening. But Degrena falls like a cloud of the morn; the ſword of Lochlin is in her ſide. Cairbar, ſhe is fallen, the riſing thought of thy youth. She is fallen, O Cairbar, the thought of thy youthful hours."

Fierce Cairbar heard the mournful ſound, and ruſhed on like ocean's whale; he ſaw the death of his daughter; and roared in the midſt of thouſands*. His ſpear met a ſon of Lochlin, and battle ſpread from wing to wing. As a hundred winds in Lochlin's groves, as fire in the firs of a hundred hills; ſo loud, ſo ruinous and vaſt the ranks of men are hewn down. Cuchullin cut off heroes like thiſtles, and Swaran waſted Erin. Curach fell by his hand, and Cairbar of the boſſy ſhield. Morglan lies in laſting reſt; and Ca-olt quivers as he dies. His white breaſt is ſtained with his blood; and his yellow hair ſtretched in the duſt of his native land.

† The ancient Scots, as well as the preſent Highlanders, drunk in ſhells; hence it is that we ſo often meet, in the old poetry, with the chief of ſhells, and the halls of ſhells.

‖ Crugal had married Degrena but a little time before the battle, conſequently ſhe may with propriety be called a ſtranger in the hall of her ſorrow.

¶ Deo-grena ſignifies a ſun-beam.

* Mediiſque in milibus ardet. VIRG.

He often had ſpread the feaſt where he fell; and often raiſed the voice of the harp; when his dogs leapt around for joy; and the youths of the chaſe prepared the bow.

Still Swaran advanced, as a ſtream that burſts from the deſert. The little hills are rolled in its courſe; and the rocks half-ſunk by its ſide. But Cuchullin ſtood before him like a hill†, that catches the clouds of heaven. The winds contend on its head of pines; and the hail rattles on its rocks. But, firm in its ſtrength, it ſtands and ſhades the ſilent vale of Cona.

So Cuchullin ſhaded the ſons of Erin, and ſtood in the midſt of thouſands. Blood riſes like the fount of a rock, from panting heroes around him. But Erin falls on either wing like ſnow in the day of the ſun.

"O ſons of Innis-fail," ſaid Grumal, "Lochlin conquers on the field. Why ſtrive we as reeds againſt the wind! Fly to the hill of dark-brown hinds." He fled like the flag of Morven, and his ſpear is a trembling beam of light behind him. Few fled with Grumal, the chief of the little ſoul: they fell in the battle of heroes on Lena's echoing heath.

High on his car, of many gems, the chief of Erin ſtood; he ſlew a mighty ſon of Lochlin, and ſpoke, in haſte, to Connal "O Connal, firſt of mortal men, thou haſt taught this arm of death! Though Erin's ſons have fled, ſhall we not fight the foe? O Carril, ſon of other times, carry my living friends to that buſhy hill. Here, Connal, let us ſtand like rocks, and ſave our flying friends."

Connal mounts the car of light. They ſtretch their

† Virgil and Milton have made uſe of a compariſon ſimilar to this; I ſhall lay both before the reader, and let him judge for himſelf which of theſe two great poets have beſt ſucceeded.

Like Eryx or like Athos great he ſhews,
Or father Appenine when white with ſnows:
His head divine obſcure in clouds he hides,
And ſhakes the founding foreſt on his ſides. DRYDEN.

On th' other ſide Satan alarm'd,
Collecting all his might, dilated ſtood
Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd;
His ſtature reach'd the ſky. MILTON.

ſhields like the darkened moon, the daughter of the ſtarry ſkies, when ſhe moves, a dun circle, through heaven. Sithfadda panted up the hill, and Duſronnal haughty ſteed. Like waves behind a whale, behind them ruſhed the foe.

Now on the riſing ſide of Cromla ſtood Erin's few ſad ſons; like a grove through which the flame had ruſhed, hurried on by the winds of the ſtormy night. Cuchullin ſtood beſide an oak. He rolled his red eye in ſilence, and heard the wind in his buſhy hair; when the ſcout of ocean came, Moran the ſon of Fithil. "The ſhips," he cried, "the ſhips of the lonely iſle! There Fingal comes, the firſt of men, the breaker of the ſhields. The waves foam before his black prows. His maſts with ſails are like groves in clouds."

"Blow," ſaid Cuchullin, "all ye winds that ruſh over my iſle of lovely miſt. Come to the death of thouſands, O chief of the hills of hinds. Thy ſails, my friend, are to me like the clouds of the morning; and thy ſhips like the light of heaven; and thou thyſelf like a pillar of fire that giveth light in the night. O Connal, firſt of men, how pleaſant are our friends! But the night is gathering around; where now are the ſhips of Fingal? Here let us paſs the hours of darkneſs, and wiſh for the moon of heaven."

The winds came down on the woods. The torrents ruſhed from the rocks. Rain gathered round the head of Cromla; and the red ſtars trembled between the flying clouds. Sad, by the ſide of a ſtream whoſe ſound was echoed by a tree, ſad by the ſide of a ſtream the chief of Erin ſat. Connal ſon of Colgar was there, and Carril of other times.

"Unhappy is the hand of Cuchullin," ſaid the ſon of Semo, "unhappy is the hand of Cuchullin, ſince he ſlew his friend. Ferda, thou ſon of Damman, I loved thee as myſelf."

"How, Cuchullin, ſon of Semo, fell the breaker of the ſhields? Well I remember," ſaid Connal, "the no-

ble ſon of Damman. Tall and fair he was like the rain-bow of the hill."

"Ferda from Albion came, the chief of a hundred hills. In Muri's† hall he learned the ſword, and won the friendſhip of Cuchullin. We moved to the chaſe together; and one was our bed in the heath.

Deugala was the ſpouſe of Cairbar, chief of the plains of Ullin. She was covered with the light of beauty, but her heart was the houſe of pride. She loved that ſun-beam of youth, the noble ſon of Damman." "Cairbar," ſaid the white armed woman, "give me half of the herd. No more I will remain in your halls. Divide the herd, dark Cairbar."

"Let Cuchullin," ſaid Cairbar, "divide my herd on the hill. His breaſt is the ſeat of juſtice. Depart thou light of beauty." I went and divided the herd. One ſnow-white bull remained. I gave that bull to Cairbar. The wrath of Deugala roſe.

"Son of Damman," begun the fair, "Cuchullin pains my ſoul. I muſt hear of his death, or Lubar's ſtream ſhall roll over me. My pale ghoſt ſhall wander near thee, and mourn the wound of my pride. Pour out the blood of Cuchullin, or pierce this heaving breaſt."

"Deugala," ſaid the fair-haired youth, "how ſhall I ſlay the ſon of Semo? He is the friend of my ſecret thoughts, and ſhall I lift the ſword? She wept three days before him, on the fourth he conſented to fight.

"I will fight my friend, Deugala! but may I fall by his ſword! Could I wander on the hill and behold the grave of Cuchullin?" We fought on the hills of Muri. Our ſwords avoid a wound. They ſlide on the helmets of ſteel; and ſound on the ſlippery ſhields. Deugala was near with a ſmile, and ſaid to the ſon of Dam-

† Muri, ſay the Iriſh bards, was an academy in Ulſter for teaching the uſe of arms. The ſignification of the word is a cluſter of people; which renders the opinion probable Cuchullin is ſaid to have been the firſt who introduced into Ireland complete armour of ſteel. He is famous, among the ſenachies, for teaching horſemanſhip to the Iriſh, and for being the firſt who uſed a chariot in that kingdom; which laſt circumſtance was the occaſion of Oſſian's being ſo circumſtantial in his deſcription of Cuchullin's car, in the firſt book.

man: "Thine arm is feeble, thou ſun-beam of youth. Thy years are not ſtrong for ſteel. Yield to the ſon of Semo. He is like the rock of Malmor."

The tear is in the eye of youth. He, faultering ſaid to me: "Cuchullin, raiſe thy boſſy ſhield. Defend thee from the hand of thy friend. My ſoul is laden with grief: for I muſt ſlay the chief of men."

I ſighed as the wind in the chink of a rock. I lifted high the edge of my ſteel. The ſun-beam of the battle fell; the firſt of Cuchullin's friends.

Unhappy is the hand of Cuchullin ſince the hero fell.

"Mournful is thy tale, ſon of the car," ſaid Carril of other times. "It ſends my ſoul back to the ages of old, and to the days of other years. Often have I heard of Comal who ſlew the friend he loved; yet victory attended his ſteel; and the battle was conſumed in his preſence.

"Comal was a ſon of Albion; the chief of an hundred hills. His deer drunk of a thouſand ſtreams. A thouſand rocks replied to the voice of his dogs. His face was the mildneſs of youth. His hand the death of heroes. One was his love, and fair was ſhe! the daughter of mighty Conloch. She appeared like a ſun-beam among women. And her hair was like the wing of the raven. Her dogs were taught to the chaſe. Her bow-ſtring ſounded on the winds of the foreſt. Her ſoul was fixed on Comal. Often met their eyes of love. Their courſe in the chaſe was one, and happy were their words in ſecret. But Gormal loved the maid, the dark chief of the gloomy Ardven. He watched her lone ſteps in the heath; the foe of unhappy Comal.

"One day, tired of the chaſe, when the miſt had concealed their friends, Comal and the daughter of Conloch met in the cave of Ronan ¶. It was the

¶ The unfortunate death of this Ronan is the ſubject of the ninth fragment of Ancient Poetry, publiſhed in 1764; it is not the work of Oſſian, though it is writ in his manner, and bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The conciſe expreſſions of Oſſian are imitated, but the thoughts are too jejune and confined to be the production of that poet. Many poems go under his name that have been evidently

wonted haunt of Comal. Its ſides were hung with his arms. A hundred ſhields of thongs were there; a hundred helms of ſounding ſteel."

"Reſt here," he ſaid, "my love Galvina; thou light of the cave of Ronan. A deer appears on Mora's brow. I go; but I will ſoon return." "I fear," ſhe ſaid, "dark Grumal my foe; he haunts the cave of Ronan. I will reſt among the arms; but ſoon return, my love."

"He went to the deer of Mora. The daughter of Conloch would try his love. She clothed her white ſides with his armour, and ſtrode from the cave of Ronan. He thought it was his foe. His heart beat high. His colour changed, and darkneſs dimmed his eyes. He drew the bow. The arrow flew. Galvina fell in blood. He run with wildneſs in his ſteps and called the daughter of Conloch. No anſwer in the lonely rock." "Where art thou, O my love!" He ſaw at length, her heaving heart beating around the feathered dart. "O Conloch's daughter, is it thou!" —He ſunk upon her breaſt.

"The hunters found the hapleſs pair; he afterwards walked the hill. But many and ſilent were his ſteps round the dark dwelling of his love. The fleet of the ocean came. He fought; the ſtrangers fled. He ſearched for his death over the field. But who could kill the mighty Comal! He threw away his dark-brown ſhield. An arrow found his manly breaſt. He ſleeps with his loved Galvina at the noiſe of the ſounding ſurge. Their green tombs are ſeen by the mariner, when he bounds on the waves of the north."

compoſed ſince his time; they are very numerous in Ireland, and ſome have come to the tranſlator's hands. They are trivial and dull to the laſt degree; ſwelling into ridiculous bombaſt, or ſinking into the loweſt kind of proſaic ſtyle.

JAMES IMRAY's [illegible] OF OSSIAN'S POEMS.

Drawn by R. Corbould Glasgow: Published by James Imray, March. 1799. Engraved by C. Warren, London

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT
EPIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Cuchullin, pleaſed with the ſtory of Carril, inſiſts with that bard for more of his ſongs. He relates the actions of Fingal in Lochlin, and death of Agandecca the beautiful ſiſter of Swaran. He had ſcarce finiſhed, when Calmar the ſon of Matha, who had adviſed the firſt battle, came wounded from the field, and told them of Swaran's deſign to ſurpriſe the remains of the Iriſh army. He himſelf propoſes to withſtand ſingly the whole force of the enemy, in a narrow paſs, till the Iriſh ſhould make good their retreat. Cuchullin, touched with the gallant propoſal of Calmar, reſolves to accompany him, and orders Carril to carry off the few that remained of the Iriſh. Morning comes, Calmar dies of his wounds; and, the ſhips of the Caledonians appearing, Swaran gives over the purſuit of the Iriſh, and returns to oppoſe Fingal's landing. Cuchullin aſhamed, after his defeat, to appear before Fingal, retires to the cave of Tura. Fingal engages the enemy, puts them to flight; but the coming on of night makes the victory not deciſive. The king, who had obſerved the gallant behaviour of his grandſon Oſcar, gives him advices concerning his conduct in peace and war. He recommends to him to place the example of his fathers before his eyes, as the beſt model for his conduct; which introduces the epiſode concerning Fainaſollis, the daughter of the king of Craca, whom Fingal had taken under his protection, in his youth. Fillan and Oſcar are diſpatched to obſerve the motions of the enemy by night; Gaul the ſon of Morni deſires the command of the army in the next battle; which Fingal promiſes to give him. Some general reflections of the poet cloſe the third day.

BOOK III.†

"PLEASANT are the words of the ſong," ſaid Cuchullin, "and lovely are the tales of other times. They are like the calm dew of the morning on the hill of roes, when the ſun is faint on its ſide, and the lake is ſettled and blue in the vale. O Carril, raiſe again thy voice, and let me hear the ſong of Tura: which was ſung in my halls of joy, when Fingal king of ſhields was there, and glowed at the deeds of his fathers."

"Fingal! thou man of battle," ſaid Carril, "early

† The ſecond night, ſince the opening of the poem, continues, and Cuchullin, Connal, and Carril ſtill ſit in the place deſcribed in the preceding book. The ſtory of Agandecca is introduced here with propriety, as great uſe is made of it in the courſe of the poem, and as it, in ſome meaſure, brings about the cataſtrophe.

were thy deeds in arms. Lochlin was conſumed in thy wrath, when thy youth ſtrove with the beauty of maids. They ſmiled at the fair-blooming face of the hero; but death was in his hands. He was ſtrong as the waters of Lora. His followers were like the roar of a thouſand ſtreams. They took the king of Lochlin in battle, but reſtored him to his ſhips. His big heart ſwelled with pride; and the death of the youth was dark in his ſoul. For none ever, but Fingal, overcame the ſtrength of the mighty Starno †.

"He ſat in the halls of his ſhells in Lochlin's woody land. He called the gray-haired Snivan, that often ſung round the circle‖ of Loda: when the ſtone of power heard his cry, and the battle turned in the field of the valiant.

"Go, gray-haired Snivan," Starno ſaid, "go to Ardven's ſea-ſurrounded rocks. Tell to Fingal king of the deſert; he that is the faireſt among his thouſands, tell him I give him my daughter, the lovelieſt maid that ever heaved a breaſt of ſnow. Her arms are white as the foam of my waves. Her ſoul is generous and mild. Let him come with his braveſt heroes, to the daughter of the ſecret hall."

Snivan came to Albion's windy hills: and fair-haired Fingal went His kindled ſoul flew before him as he bounded on the waves of the north.

"Welcome," ſaid the dark-brown Starno, "welcome, king of rocky Morven; and ye his heroes of might; ſons of the lonely iſle! Three days within my halls ſhall ye feaſt; and three days purſue my boars, that your fame may reach the maid that dwells in the ſecret hall."

"The king of ſnow¶ deſigned their death, and gave the feaſt of ſhells. Fingal, who doubted the foe, kept on his arms of ſteel. The ſons of death were afraid,

† Starno was the father of Swaran as well as Agandecca. His fierce and cruel character is well marked in other poems concerning the times.

‖ This paſſage moſt certainly alludes to the religion of Lochlin, and 'the ſtone of power' here mentioned is the image of one of the deities of Scandinavia.

¶ Starno is here poetically called the king of ſnow, from the great quantities of ſnow that fall in his dominions.

and fled from the eyes of the hero. The voice of ſprightly mirth aroſe. The trembling harps of joy are ſtrung. Bards ſing the battle of heroes; or the heaving breaſt of love. Ullin, Fingal's bard, was there; the ſweet voice of the hill of Cona. He praiſed the daughter of ſnow; and Morven's † high-deſcended chief. The daughter of ſnow overheard, and left the hall of her ſecret ſigh. She came in all her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the eaſt. Lovelineſs was around her as light. Her ſteps were like the muſic of ſongs. She ſaw the youth and loved him. He was the ſtolen ſigh of her ſoul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in ſecret: and ſhe bleſt the chief of Morven

"The third day with all its beams, ſhone bright on the wood of boars. Forth moved the dark-browed Starno; and Fingal king of ſhields. Half the day they ſpent in the chaſe; and the ſpear of Fingal was red in the blood of Gormal ‖.

"It was then the daughter of Starno, with blue eyes rolling in tears, came with her voice of love, and ſpoke to the king of Morven.

"Fingal, high-deſcended chief, truſt not Starno's heart of pride. Within that wood he has placed his chiefs; beware of the wood of death. But remember, ſon of the hill, remember Agandecca; ſave me from the wrath of my father, king of the windy Morven!"

"The youth, with unconcern, went on; his heroes by his ſide. The ſons of death fell by his hand; and Gormal echoed around.

"Before the halls of Starno the ſons of the chaſe convened. The king's dark brows were like clouds. His eyes like meteors of night. "Bring hither," he cries, "Agandecca to her lovely king of Morven. His hand is ſtained with the blood of my people; and her words have not been in vain."

† All the north-weſt coaſt of Scotland probably went of old under the name of Morven, which ſignifies a ridge of very high hills.

‖ Gormal is the name of a hill in Lochlin, in the neighbourhood of Starno's palace.

"She came with the red eye of tears. She came with her looſe raven locks. Her white breaſt heaved with ſighs, like the foam of the ſtreamy Lubar. Starno pierced her ſide with ſteel. She fell like a wreath of ſnow that ſlides from the rocks of Ronan; when the woods are ſtill, and the echo deepens in the vale.

"Then Fingal eyed his valiant chiefs; his valiant chiefs took arms. The gloom of the battle roared, and Lochlin fled or died. Pale, in his bounding ſhip he cloſed the maid of the raven hair. Her tomb aſcends on Ardven, and the ſea roars round the dark dwelling of Agandecca."

"Bleſſed be her ſoul," ſaid Cuchullin, "and bleſſed be the mouth of the ſong. Strong was the youth of Fingal, and ſtrong is his arm of age. Lochlin ſhall fall again before the king of echoing Morven. Shew thy face from a cloud, O moon; light his white ſails on the wave of the night. And if any ſtrong ſpirit† of heaven ſits on that low-hung cloud; turn his dark ſhips from the rock, thou rider of the ſtorm!"

Such were the words of Cuchullin at the ſound of the mountain-ſtream; when Calmar aſcended the hill, the wounded ſon of Matha. From the field he came in his blood. He leaned on his bending ſpear. Feeble is the arm of battle! but ſtrong the ſoul of the hero!

"Welcome! O ſon of Matha," ſaid Connal, "welcome art thou to thy friends! Why burſts that broken ſigh from the breaſt of him that never feared before?"

"And never, Connal, will he fear, chief of the pointed ſteel. My ſoul brightens in danger, and exults in the noiſe of battle. I am of the race of ſteel; my fathers never feared.

"Cormar was the firſt of my race. He ſported thro' the ſtorms of the waves. His black ſkiff bounded on ocean; and travelled on the wings of the blaſt. A ſpi-

† This is the only paſſage in the poem that has the appearance of religion. But Cuchullin's apoſtrophe to this ſpirit is accompanied with a doubt, ſo that it is not eaſy to determine whether the hero meant a ſuperior being, or the ghoſts of deceaſed warriors, who were ſuppoſed in thoſe times to rule the ſtorms, and to tranſport themſelves in a guſt of wind from one country to another.

rit once embroiled the night. Seas ſwell and rocks reſound. Winds drive along the clouds. The lightning flies on wings of fire. He feared, and came to land; then bluſhed that he feared at all. He ruſhed again among the waves to find the ſon of the wind. Three youths guide the bounding bark; he ſtood with the ſword unſheathed. When the low-hung vapour, paſſed he took it by the curling head, and ſearched its dark womb with his ſteel. The ſon of the wind forſook the air. The moon and ſtars returned.

"Such was the boldneſs of my race; and Calmar is like his fathers. Danger flies from the uplifted ſword. They beſt ſucceed who dare."

"But now, ye ſons of green-valley'd Erin, retire from Lena's bloody heath. Collect the ſad remnant of our friends, and join the ſword of Fingal. I heard the ſound of Lochlin's advancing arms; but Calmar will remain and fight. My voice ſhall be ſuch, my friends, as if thouſands were behind me. But, ſon of Semo, remember me. Remember Calmar's lifeleſs corſe. After Fingal has waſted the field, place me by ſome ſtone of remembrance, that future times may hear my fame; and the mother† of Calmar rejoice over the ſtone of my renown."

"No: ſon of Matha," ſaid Cuchullin, "I will never leave thee. My joy is in the unequal field: my ſoul increaſes in danger. Connal, and Carril of other times, carry off the ſad ſons of Erin; and when the battle is over, ſearch for our pale corſes in this narrow way. For near this oak we ſhall ſtand in the ſtream of the battle of thouſands. O Fithil's ſon, with feet of wind, fly over the heath of Lena. Tell to Fingal that Erin is inthralled, and bid the king of Morven haſten. O let him come like the ſun in a ſtorm, when he ſhines on the hills of graſs."

Morning is gray on Cromla; the ſons of the ſea aſcend. Calmar ſtood forth to meet them in the pride

† Alcietha, her lamentation over her ſon is introduced in the poem concerning the death of Cuchullin, printed in this collection.

of his kindling ſoul. But pale was the face of the warrior; he leaned on his father's ſpear. That ſpear which he brought from Lara's hall, when the ſoul of his mother was ſad. But ſlowly now the hero falls, like a tree on the plains of Cona. Dark Cuchullin ſtands alone like a rock || in a ſandy vale. The ſea comes with its waves, and roars on its hardened ſides. Its head is covered with foam, and the hills are echoing around. Now from the gray miſt of the ocean, the white-ſailed ſhips of Fingal appear. High is the grove of their maſts as they nod, by turns, on the rolling wave.

Swaran ſaw them from the hill, and returned from the ſons of Erin. As ebbs the reſounding ſea, through the hundred iſles of Iniſtore; ſo loud, ſo vaſt, ſo immenſe returned the ſons of Lochlin againſt the king of the deſert hill. But bending, weeping, ſad, and ſlow, and dragging his long ſpear behind, Cuchullin ſunk in Cromla's wood, and mourned his fallen friends. He feared the face of Fingal, who was wont to greet him from the fields of renown.

"How many lie there of my heroes! the chiefs of Innis-fail! they that were cheerful in the hall, when the ſound of the ſhells aroſe. No more ſhall I find their ſteps in the heath, or hear their voice in the chaſe of the hinds. Pale, ſilent, low on bloody beds are they who were my friends! O ſpirits of the lately dead, meet Cuchullin on his heath. Converſe with him on the wind, when the ruſtling tree of Tura's cave reſounds. There, far remote, I ſhall lie unknown. No bard ſhall hear of me. No gray ſtone ſhall riſe to my renown. Mourn me with the dead, O Bragela! departed is my fame."

Such were the words of Cuchullin, when he ſunk in the woods of Cromla.

Fingal, tall in his ſhip, ſtretched his bright lance be-

|| So ſome tall rock o'erhangs the hoary main,
By winds aſſail'd, by billows beat in vain,
Unmov'd it bears, above, the tempeſts blow,
And ſees the wat'ry mountains break below. POPE.

fore him. Terrible was the gleam of the ſteel: it was like the green meteor of death, ſetting in the heath of Malmor, when the traveller is alone, and the broad moon is darkened in heaven.

"The battle is over," ſaid the king, "and I behold the blood of my friends. Sad is the heath of Lena! and mournful the oaks of Cromla! The hunters have fallen there in their ſtrength! and the ſon of Semo is no more. Ryno and Fillan, my ſons, ſound the horn of Fingal's war. Aſcend that hill on the ſhore, and call the children of the foe. Call them from the grave of Lamdarg, the chief of other times. Be your voice like that of your father, when he enters the battles of his ſtrength. I wait for the dark mighty man: I wait on Lena's ſhore for Swaran. And let him come with all his race; for ſtrong in battle are the friends of the dead."

Fair Ryno flew like lightning; dark Fillan as the ſhade of autumn. On Lena's heath their voice is heard; the ſons of Ocean heard the horn of Fingal's war. As the roaring eddy of ocean returning from the kingdom of ſnows; ſo ſtrong, ſo dark, ſo ſudden came down the ſons of Lochlin. The king in their front appears in the diſmal pride of his arms. Wrath burns in his dark-brown face: and his eyes roll in the fire of his valour.

Fingal beheld the ſon of Starno; and he remembered Agandecca. For Swaran with the tears of youth had mourned his white-boſomed ſiſter. He ſent Ullin of the ſongs to bid him to the feaſt of ſhells. For pleaſant on Fingal's ſoul returned the remembrance of the firſt of his loves.

Ullin came with aged ſteps, and ſpoke to Starno's ſon. "O thou that dwelleſt afar, ſurrounded, like a rock, with thy waves, come to the feaſt of the king, and paſs the day in reſt. To-morrow let us fight, O Swaran, and break the echoing ſhields."

"To-day" ſaid Starno's wrathful ſon, "we break

the echoing ſhields: to-morrow my feaſts will be ſpread; and Fingal lie on earth."

"And, to-morrow, let his feaſt be ſpread," ſaid Fingal with a ſmile; "for, to-day, O my ſons, we ſhall break the echoing ſhields. Oſſian, ſtand thou near my arm. Gaul, lift thy terrible ſword. Fergus, bend thy crooked yew. Throw, Fillan, thy lance through heaven.—Lift your ſhields like the darkened moon. Be your ſpears the meteors of death. Follow me in the path of my fame; and equal my deeds in battle."

As a hundred winds on Morven; as the ſtreams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly ſucceſſive over heaven; or, as the dark ocean aſſaults the ſhore of the deſert: ſo roaring, ſo vaſt, ſo terrible the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath. The groan of the people ſpread over the hills; it was like the thunder of night, when the cloud burſts on Cona; and a thouſand ghoſts ſhriek at once on the hollow wind.

Fingal ruſhed on in his ſtrength, terrible as the ſpirit of Trenmor; when, in a whirlwind, he comes to Morven to ſee the children of his pride. The oaks reſound on their hills, and the rocks fall down before him. Bloody was the hand of my father when he whirled the lightning of his ſword. He remembers the battles of his youth, and the field is waſted in his courſe.

Ryno went on like a pillar of fire. Dark is the brow of Gaul. Fergus ruſhed forward with feet of wind; and Fillan like the miſt of the hill. Myſelf†, like a rock, came down, I exulted in the ſtrength of the king. Many were the deaths of my arm; and diſmal was the gleam of my ſword. My locks were not then ſo gray; nor trembled my hands of age. My eyes were not cloſed in darkneſs; nor failed my feet in the race.

Who can relate the deaths of the people; or the deeds of mighty heroes; when Fingal, burning in his wrath, conſumed the ſons of Lochlin? Groans ſwelled

† Here the poet celebrates his own actions, but he does it in ſuch a manner that we are not diſpleaſed The mention of the great actions of his youth immediately ſuggeſts to him the helpleſs ſituation of his age. We do not deſpiſe him for ſelfiſh praiſe, but feel his misfortunes.

on groans, from hill to hill, till night had covered all. Pale, ſtaring like a herd of deer, the ſons of Lochlin convene on Lena.

We ſat and heard the ſprightly harp at Lubar's gentle ſtream. Fingal himſelf was next to the foe; and liſtened to the tales of bards. His godlike race were in the ſong, the chiefs of other times. Attentive, leaning on his ſhield, the king of Morven ſat. The wind whiſtled through his aged locks, and his thoughts are of the days of other years. Near him, on his bending ſpear, my young, my lovely Oſcar ſtood. He admired the king of Morven: and his actions were ſwelling in his ſoul.

"Son of my ſon," began the king, "O Oſcar, pride of youth, I ſaw the ſhining of thy ſword and gloried in my race. Purſue the glory of our fathers, and be what they have been; when Trenmor lived, the firſt of men, and Trathal the father of heroes. They fought the battle in their youth, and are the ſong of bards. O Oſcar! bend the ſtrong in arms: but ſpare the feeble hand. Be thou a ſtream of many tides againſt the foes of thy people; but like the gale that moves the graſs to thoſe who aſk thine aid. So Trenmor lived; ſuch Trathal was; and ſuch has Fingal been. My arm was the ſupport of the injured; and the weak reſted behind the lightning of my ſteel.

"Oſcar! I was young like thee, when lovely Fainaſollis came: that ſun-beam! that mild light of love! the daughter of Craca's† king! I then returned from Cona's heath, and few were in my train. A white-ſailed boat appeared far off; we ſaw it like a miſt that rode on ocean's blaſt. It ſoon approached; we ſaw the fair. Her white breaſt heaved with ſighs. The wind was in her looſe dark hair; her roſy cheek had tears. "Daughter of beauty," calm I ſaid, "what ſigh is in that breaſt? Can I, young as I am, defend

† What the Craca here mentioned was, is not, at this diſtance of time, eaſy to determine. The moſt probable opinion is, that it was one of the Shetland iſles. There is a ſtory concerning a daughter of the king of Craca in the ſixth book.

thee, daughter of the ſea? My ſword is not unmatched in war, but dauntleſs is my heart."

"To thee I fly," with ſighs ſhe replied, "O chief of mighty men! To thee I fly, chief of ſhells, ſupporter of the feeble hand! The king of Craca's echoing iſle owned me the ſun-beam of his race. And often did the hills of Cromla reply to the ſighs of love for the unhappy Fainaſollis. Sora's chief beheld me fair; and loved the daughter of Craca. His ſword is like a beam of light upon the warrior's ſide. But dark is his brow; and tempeſts are in his ſoul. I ſhun him on the rolling ſea; but Sora's chief purſues."

"Reſt thou," I ſaid "behind my ſhield; reſt in peace, thou beam of light! The gloomy chief of Sora will fly, if Fingal's arm is like his ſoul. In ſome lone cave I might conceal thee, daughter of the ſea! But Fingal never flies; for where the danger threatens, I rejoice in the ſtorm of ſpears." I ſaw the tears upon her cheek. I pitied Craca's fair.

Now, like a dreadful wave afar, appeared the ſhip of ſtormy Borbar. His maſts high-bended over the ſea behind their ſheets of ſnow. White roll the waters on either ſide. The ſtrength of ocean ſounds. "Come thou," I ſaid, "from the roar of ocean, thou rider of the ſtorm. Partake the feaſt within my hall. It is the houſe of ſtrangers." "The maid ſtood trembling by my ſide; he drew the bow: ſhe fell. "Unerring is thy hand," I ſaid, "but feeble was the foe." We fought, nor weak was the ſtrife of death: He ſunk beneath my ſword. We laid them in two tombs of ſtones; the unhappy children of youth.

Such have I been in my youth, O Oſcar; be thou like the age of Fingal. Never ſeek the battle, nor ſhun it when it comes. Fillan and Oſcar of the dark brown hair; ye children of the race; fly over the heath of roaring winds; and view the ſons of Lochlin. Far off I hear the noiſe of their fear, like the ſtorms of echoing Cona. Go; that they may not fly my ſword along the waves of the north. For many chiefs of E-

rin's race lie here on the dark bed of death. The children of the ſtorm are low; the ſons of echoing Cromla."

The heroes flew like two dark clouds; two dark clouds that are the chariots of ghoſts; when air's dark children come to frighten hapleſs men.

It was then that Gaul†, the ſon of Morni, ſtood like a rock in the night. His ſpear is glittering to the ſtars; his voice like many ſtreams. "Son of battle," cried the chief, "O Fingal, king of ſhells! let the bards of many ſongs ſoothe Erin's friends to reſt. And, Fingal, ſheath thy ſword of death; and let thy people fight. We wither away without our fame; for our king is the only breaker of ſhields. When morning riſes on our hills, behold at a diſtance our deeds. Let Lochlin feel the ſword of Morni's ſon, that bards may ſing of me. Such was the cuſtom heretofore of Fingal's noble race. Such was thine own, thou king of ſwords, in battles of the ſpear."

"O ſon of Morni," Fingal replied, "I glory in thy fame. Fight; but my ſpear ſhall be near to aid thee in the midſt of danger. Raiſe, raiſe the voice, ſons of the ſong, and lull me into reſt. Here will Fingal lie amidſt the wind of night. And if thou, Agandecca, art near, among the children of thy land; if thou ſitteſt on a blaſt of wind among the high-ſhrowded maſts of Lochlin; come to my dreams‖, my fair one, and ſhew thy bright face to my ſoul."

Many a voice and many a harp in tuneful ſounds aroſe. Of Fingal's noble deeds they ſung, and of the noble race of the hero. And ſometimes on the lovely ſound was heard the name of the now mournful Oſſian.

† Gaul, the ſon of Morni, was chief of a tribe that diſputed long the pre-eminence with Fingal himſelf. They were reduced at laſt to obedience, and Gaul, from an enemy, turned Fingal's beſt friend and greateſt hero. His character is ſomething like that of Ajax in the Iliad; a hero of more ſtrength than conduct in battle. He was very fond of military fame, and here he demands the next battle to himſelf. The poet, by an artifice, removes Fingal, that his return may be the more magnificent.

‖ The poet prepares us for the dream of Fingal in the next book.

Often have I fought, and often won in battles of the ſpear. But blind, and tearful, and forlorn I now walk with little men. O Fingal, with thy race of battle I now behold thee not! The wild roes feed upon the green tomb of the mighty king of Morven! Bleſt be thy ſoul, thou king of ſwords, thou moſt renowned on the hills of Cona!

FINGAL
Engaging the Spirit of Loda.
Vide Carie-thura.

Painted by H. Singleton, A.R.A. and Engrav'd by C. Warren, London

Glasgow: Printed for James Lindsay, March, 1799.

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT

EPIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

The action of the poem being ſuſpended by night, Oſſian takes that opportunity to relate his own actions at the lake of Lego, and his courtſhip of Everallin who was the mother of Oſcar, and had died ſome time before the expedition of Fingal into Ireland. Her ghoſt appears to him, and tells him that Oſcar, who had been ſent, the beginning of the night, to obſerve the enemy, was engaged with an advanced party and almoſt overpowered. Oſſian relieves his ſon; and an alarm is given to Fingal of the approach of Swaran. The king riſes, calls his army together, and, as he had promiſed the preceding night, devolves the command on Gaul the ſon of Morni, while he himſelf, after charging his ſons to behave gallantly and defend his people, retires to a hill, from whence he could have a view of the battle. The battle joins; the poet relates Oſcar's great actions. But when Oſcar, in conjunction with his father, conquered in one wing, Gaul, who was attacked by Swaran in perſon, was on the point of retreating in the other. Fingal ſends Ullin his bard to encourage him with a war ſong, but notwithſtanding, Swaran prevails; and Gaul and his army are obliged to give way. Fingal, deſcending from the hill, rallies them again: Swaran deſiſts from the purſuit, poſſeſſes himſelf of a riſing ground, reſtores the ranks and waits the approach of Fingal. The king, having encouraged his men, gives the neceſſary orders, and renews the battle. Cuchullin, who, with his friend Connal, and Carril his bard, had retired to the cave of Tura, hearing the noiſe, came to the brow of the hill, which overlooked the field of battle, where he ſaw Fingal engaged with the enemy. He, being hindered by Connal from joining Fingal, who was himſelf upon the point of obtaining a complete victory, ſends Carril to congratulate that hero of his ſucceſs.

BOOK IV †.

WHO comes with her ſongs from the mountain, like the bow of the ſhowery Lena? It is the maid of the voice of love. The white-armed daughter of Toſcar. Often haſt thou heard my ſong, often given the tear of beauty. Doſt thou come to the battles of thy people? and to hear the actions of Oſcar? When ſhall I ceaſe

† Fingal being aſleep and the action ſuſpended by night, the poet introduces the ſtory of his courtſhip of Everallin the daughter of Branno. The epiſode is neceſſary to clear up ſeveral paſſages that follow in the poem; at the ſame time that it naturally brings on the action of the book, which may be ſuppoſed to begin about the middle of the third night from the opening of the poem. This book, as many of Oſſian's other compoſitions, is addreſſed to the beautiful Malvina the daughter of Toſcar. She appears to have been in love with Oſcar, and to have affected the company of the father after the death of the ſon.

to mourn, by the ſtreams of the echoing Cona? My years have paſſed away in battle, and my age is darkened with ſorrow.

Daughter of the hand of ſnow! I was not ſo mournful and blind; I was not ſo dark and forlorn, when Everallin loved me! Everallin with the dark-brown hair, the white-boſomed love of Cormac. A thouſand heroes fought the maid, ſhe denied her love to a thouſand; the ſons of the ſword were deſpiſed: for graceful in her eyes was Oſſian.

I went, in ſuit of the maid, to Lego's ſable ſurge: twelve of my people were there, the ſons of the ſtreamy Morven. We came to Branno, friend of ſtrangers: Branno of the ſounding mail. "From whence," he ſaid, "are the arms of ſteel? Not eaſy to win is the maid, that has denied the blue-eyed ſons of Erin. But bleſt be thou, O ſon of Fingal. Happy is the maid that waits thee. Though twelve daughters of beauty were mine, thine were the choice, thou ſon of fame!" Then he opened the hall of the maid, the dark-haired Everallin. Joy kindled in our breaſts of ſteel and bleſt the maid of Branno.

Above us on the hill appeared the people of ſtately Cormac. Eight were the heroes of the chief; and the heath flamed with their arms. There Colla, Durra of the wounds, there mighty Toſcar, and Tago, there Freſtal, the victorious ſtood; Dairo of the happy deeds, and Dala the battle's bulwark in the narrow way. The ſword flamed in the hand of Cormac, and graceful was the look of the hero.

Eight were the heroes of Oſſian; Ullin ſtormy ſon of war; Mullo of the generous deeds; the noble, the graceful Scelacha; Oglan, and Cerdal the wrathful, and Dumarican's brows of death. And why ſhould Ogar be the laſt; ſo wide renowned on the hills of Ardven?

Ogar met Dala the ſtrong, face to face, on the field of heroes. The battle of the chiefs was like the wind on ocean's foamy waves. The dagger is remembered by

Ogar; the weapon which he loved; nine times he drowned it in Dala's ſide. The ſtormy battle turned. Three times I pierced Cormac's ſhield: three times he broke his ſpear. But, unhappy youth of love! I cut his head away. Five times I ſhook it by the lock. The friends of Cormac fled.

Whoever would have told me, lovely maid†, when then I ſtrove in battle; that blind, forſaken, and forlorn I now ſhould paſs the night; firm ought his mail to have been, and unmatched his arm in battle.

Now ‖ on Lena's gloomy heath the voice of muſic died away. The unconſtant blaſt blew hard, and the high oak ſhook its leaves around me; of Everallin were my thoughts, when ſhe, in all the light of beauty, and her blue eyes rolling in tears, ſtood on a cloud before my ſight and ſpoke with feeble voice.

"O Oſſian riſe and ſave my ſon; ſave Oſcar chief of men. Near the red oak of Lubar's ſtream, he fights with Lochlin's ſons." She ſunk into her cloud again. I clothed me with my ſteel. My ſpear ſupported my ſteps, and my rattling armour rung. I hummed, as I was wont in danger, the ſongs of heroes of old. Like diſtant thunder¶ Lochlin heard; they fled; my ſon purſued.

I called him like a diſtant ſtream. "My ſon return over Lena. No further purſue the foe," I ſaid, "though Oſſian is behind thee." He came; and lovely in my ear was Oſcar's ſounding ſteel. "Why didſt thou ſtop my hand," he ſaid, "till death had covered all? For dark and dreadful by the ſtream they met thy ſon and

† The poet addreſſes himſelf to Malvina the daughter of Toſcar.

‖ The poet returns to his ſubject. If one could fix the time of the year in which the action of the poem happened, from the ſcene deſcribed here, I ſhould be tempted to place it in autumn. The trees ſhed their leaves, and the winds are variable, both which circumſtances agree with that ſeaſon of the year.

¶ Oſſian gives the reader a high idea of himſelf. His very ſong frightens the enemy. This paſſage reſembles one in the eighteenth Iliad, where the voice of Achilles frightens the Trojans from the body of Patroclus.

Forth march'd the chief, and diſtant from the crowd
High on the rampart rais'd his voice aloud.
So high his brazen voice the hero rear'd,
Hoſts drop their arms and tremble as they fear'd. POPE.

Fillan. They watched the terrors of the night. Our ſwords have conquered ſome. But as the winds of night pour the ocean over the white ſands of Mora, ſo dark advance the ſons of Lochlin over Lena's ruſtling heath. The ghoſts of night ſhriek afar; and I have ſeen the meteors of death. Let me awake the king of Morven, he that ſmiles in danger; for he is like the ſun of heaven that riſes in a ſtorm."

Fingal had ſtarted from a dream, and leaned on Trenmor's ſhield; the dark-brown ſhield of his fathers; which they had lifted of old in the battles of their race. The hero had ſeen in his reſt the mournful form of Agandecca; ſhe came from the way of the ocean, and ſlowly, lonely, moved over Lena. Her face was pale like the miſt of Cromla; and dark were the tears of her cheek. She often raiſed her dim hand from her robe; her robe which was of the clouds of the deſert; ſhe raiſed her dim hand over Fingal, and turned away her ſilent eyes.

"Why weeps the daughter of Starno," ſaid Fingal, with a ſigh? "Why is thy face ſo pale, thou daughter of the clouds?" She departed on the wind of Lena; and left him in the midſt of the night. She mourned the ſons of her people that were to fall by Fingal's hand.

The hero ſtarted from reſt, and ſtill beheld her in his ſoul. The ſound of Oſcar's ſteps approached. The king ſaw the gray ſhield on his ſide. For the faint beam of the morning came over the waters of Ullin.

"What do the foes in their fear!" ſaid the riſing king of Morven. "Or fly they through ocean's foam, or wait they the battle of ſteel! But why ſhould Fingal aſk? I hear their voice on the early wind. Fly over Lena's heath, O Oſcar, and awake our friends to battle."

The king ſtood by the ſtone of Lubar; and thrice raiſed his terrible voice. The deer ſtarted from the fountains of Cromla: and all the rocks ſhook on their hills. Like the noiſe of a hundred mountain-ſtreams,

that burſt and roar, and foam; like the clouds that gather to a tempeſt on the blue face of the ſky; ſo met the ſons of the deſert, round the terrible voice of Fingal. For pleaſant was the voice of the king of Morven to the warriors of his land: often had he led them to battle, and returned with the ſpoils of the foe.

"Come to battle," ſaid the king, "ye children of the ſtorm. Come to the death of thouſands. Comhal's ſon will ſee the fight. My ſword ſhall wave on that hill, and be the ſhield of my people. But never may you need it, warriors, while the ſon of Morni fights, the chief of mighty men. He ſhall lead my battle; that his fame may riſe in the ſong. O ye ghoſts of heroes dead! ye riders of the ſtorm of Cromla! receive my falling people with joy, and bring them to your hills. And may the blaſt of Lena carry them over my ſeas, that they may come to my ſilent dreams, and delight my ſoul in reſt.

"Fillan and Oſcar, of the dark-brown hair, fair Ryno, with the pointed ſteel! advance with valour to the fight; and behold the ſon of Morni. Let your ſwords be like his in the ſtrife: and behold the deeds of his hands. Protect the friends of your father: and remember the chiefs of old. My children, I ſhall ſee you yet though here ye ſhould fall in Erin. Soon ſhall our cold, pale ghoſts meet in a cloud, and fly over the hills of Cona."

Next like a dark and ſtormy cloud, edged round with [illegible] and lightning of heaven, and flying weſtward from the morning's beam, the king of hills removed. Terrible [illegible] the light of his armour, and two ſpears are in his hand. His gray hair falls on the wind. He often looks back on the war. Three bards attend the ſon of fame, to carry his words to the heroes. High on Cromla's ſide he ſat, waving the lightning of his ſword, and as he waved we moved.

Joy roſe in Oſcar's face. His cheek is red. His eye ſheds tears. The ſword is a beam of fire in his hand. He came, and ſmiling, ſpoke to Oſſian. "O ruler of

the fight of ſteel! my father, hear thy ſon. Retire with Morven's mighty chief; and give me Oſſian's fame. And if here I fall; my king, remember that breaſt of ſnow, that lonely ſun-beam of my love, the white handed daughter of Toſcar. For, with red cheek from the rock, and bending over the ſtream, her ſoft hair flies about her boſom, as ſhe pours the ſigh for Oſcar. Tell her I am on my hills a lightly bounding ſon of the wind; that hereafter, in a cloud, I may meet the lovely maid of Toſcar."

"Raiſe, Oſcar, rather raiſe my tomb. I will not yield the fight to thee. For firſt and bloodieſt in the war my arm ſhall teach thee how to fight. But, remember, my ſon, to place this ſword, this bow, and the horn of my deer, within that dark and narrow houſe, whoſe mark is one gray ſtone. Oſcar, I have no love to leave to the care of my ſon; for graceful Everallin is no more, the lovely daughter of Branno."

Such were our words, when Gaul's loud voice came growing on the wind. He waved on high the ſword of his father, and ruſhed to death and wounds.

As waves white-bubbling over the deep come ſwelling, roaring on; as rocks of ooze meet roaring waves: ſo foes attacked and fought. Man met with man, and ſteel with ſteel. Shields ſound; men fall. As a hundred hammers on the ſon of the furnace, ſo roſe, ſo rung their ſwords.

Gaul ruſhed on like a whirlwind in Ardven. The deſtruction of heroes is on his ſword. Swaran was like the fire of the deſert in the echoing heath of Gormal. How can I give to the ſong the death of many ſpears? My ſword roſe high, and flamed in the ſtrife of blood. And, Oſcar, terrible wert thou, my beſt, my greateſt ſon! I rejoiced in my ſecret ſoul, when his ſword flamed over the ſlain. They fled amain through Lena's heath: and we purſued and ſlew. As ſtones that bound from rock to rock; as axes in echoing woods; as thunder rolls from hill to hill in diſmal broken peals; ſo blow ſuc-

ceeded to blow, and death to death, from the hand of Oſcar † and mine.

But Swaran cloſed round Morni's ſon, as the ſtrength of the tide of Iniſtore The king half roſe from his hill at the ſight, and half aſſumed the ſpear. "Go, Ullin, go, my aged bard," begun the king of Morven. "Remind the mighty Gaul of battle; remind him of his fathers. Support the yielding fight with ſong; for ſong enlivens war." Tall Ullin went, with ſteps of age, and ſpoke to the king of ſwords.

"Son ‖ of the chief of generous ſteeds! high-bounding king of ſpears. Strong arm in every perilous toil. Hard heart that never yields. Chief of the pointed arms of death. Cut down the foe; let no white ſail bound round dark Iniſtore. Be thine arm like thunder, thine eyes like fire, thy heart of ſolid rock. Whirl round thy ſword as a meteor at night, and lift thy ſhield like the flame of death. Son of the chief of generous ſteeds, cut down the foe. Deſtroy." The hero's heart beat high. But Swaran came with battle. He cleft the ſhield of Gaul in twain; and the ſons of the deſert fled.

Now Fingal aroſe in his might, and thrice he reared his voice. Cromla anſwered around, and the ſons of the deſert ſtood ſtill. They bent their red faces to earth, aſhamed at the preſence of Fingal. He came like a cloud of rain in the days of the ſun, when ſlow it rolls on the hill, and fields expect the ſhower. Swaran beheld the terrible king of Morven, and ſtopped in the midſt of his courſe. Dark he leaned on his ſpear, rolling his red eyes around. Silent and tall he ſeemed as

† Oſſian never fails to give a fine character to his beloved ſon. His ſpeech to his father is that of a hero; it contains the ſubmiſſion due to a parent, and the warmth that becomes a young warrior. There is a propriety in dwelling here on the actions of Oſcar, as the beautiful Malvina, to whom the book is addreſſed, was in love with that hero.

‖ The war-ſong of Ullin varies from the reſt of the poem in the verſification. It runs down like a torrent; and conſiſts almoſt entirely of epithets. The cuſtom of encouraging men in battle with extempore rhymes, has been carried down almoſt to our own times. Several of theſe war-ſongs are extant, but the moſt of them are only a groupe of epithets, without beauty or harmony, utterly deſtitute of poetical merit.

an oak on the banks of Lubar, which had its branches blaſted of old by the lightning of heaven. It bends over the ſtream, and the gray moſs whiſtles in the wind: ſo ſtood the king. Then ſlowly he retired to the riſing heath of Lena. His thouſands pour around the hero, and the darkneſs of battle gathers on the hill.

Fingal, like a beam from heaven, ſhone in the midſt of his people. His heroes gather around him, and he ſends forth the voice of his power. "Raiſe my ſtandards † on high. Spread them on Lena's wind, like the flames of an hundred hills. Let them ſound on the winds of Erin, and remind us of the fight. Ye ſons of the roaring ſtreams, that pour from a thouſand hills, be near the king of Morven: attend to the words of his power. Gaul, ſtrongeſt arm of death! O Oſcar, of the future fights! Connal, ſon of the blue ſteel of Sora! Dermid of the dark-brown hair! and Oſſian king of many ſongs, be near your father's arm!"

We reared the ſun-beam ‖ of battle; the ſtandard of the king. Each hero's ſoul exulted with joy, as, waving it flew on the wind. It was ſtudded with gold above, as the blue wide ſhell of the nightly ſky. Each hero had his ſtandard too; and each his gloomy men.

"Behold," ſaid the king of generous ſhells, "how Lochlin divides on Lena. They ſtand like broken clouds on the hill, or an half conſumed grove of oaks; when we ſee the ſky through its branches, and the meteor paſſing behind. Let every chief among the friends of Fingal take a dark troop of thoſe that frown ſo high; nor let a ſon of the echoing groves bound on the waves of Iniſtore."

"Mine," ſaid Gaul, "be the ſeven chiefs that came from Lano's lake." "Let Iniſtore's dark king," ſaid Oſcar, "come to the ſword of Oſſian's ſon." "To mine the king of Iniſcon," ſaid Connal, "heart of ſteel!"

† Th' imperial enſign, which full high advanc'd,
Shone like a meteor ſtreaming to the wind. MILTON.

‖ Fingal's ſtandard was diſtinguiſhed by the name of ſun-beam; probably on account of its bright colour, and its being ſtudded with gold. To begin a battle is expreſſed, in old compoſition, by liſting of the ſun-beam.

"Or Mudan's chief or I," ſaid brown-haired Dermid, "ſhall ſleep on clay-cold earth." My choice, though now ſo weak and dark, was Terman's battling king; I promiſed with my hand to win the hero's dark-brown ſhield. "Bleſt and victorious be my chiefs," ſaid Fingal of the mildeſt look; "Swaran king of roaring waves, thou art the choice of Fingal."

Now, like an hundred different winds that pour thro' many vales; divided, dark, the ſons of the hill advanced, and Cromla echoed around.

How can I relate the deaths when we cloſed in the ſtrife of our ſteel? O daughter of Toſcar! bloody were our hands! The gloomy ranks of Lochlin fell like the banks of the roaring Cona. Our arms were victorious on Lena; each chief fulfilled his promiſe. Beſide the murmur of Branno thou didſt often ſit, O maid; when thy white boſom roſe frequent, like the down of the ſwan when ſlow ſhe ſails the lake, and ſidelong winds are blowing. Thou haſt ſeen the ſun † retire red and ſlow behind his cloud; night gathering round on the mountain, while the unfrequent blaſt ‖ roared in narrow vales. At length the rain beats hard: and thunder rolls in peals. Lightening glances on the rocks. Spirits ride on beams of fire. And the ſtrength of the mountain-ſtreams ¶ come roaring down the hills. Such was the noiſe of battle, maid of the arms of ſnow. Why daughter of the hill, that tear? the maids of Lochlin have cauſe to weep. The people of their country fell, for bloody was the blue ſteel of the race of my heroes.

† Above the reſt the ſun, who never lies,
Foretels the change of weather in the ſkies.
For if he riſe, unwilling to his race,
Clouds on his brow, and ſpots upon his face;
Or if thro' miſts he ſhoot his ſullen beams,
Frugal of light, in looſe and ſtraggling ſtreams,
Suſpect a driſling day. DRYDEN.

‖ For ere the riſing winds begin to roar,
The working ſeas advance to waſh the ſhore;
Soft whiſpers run along the leafy wood,
And mountains whiſtle to the murm'ring flood. DRYDEN.

¶ The rapid rains, deſcending from the hills,
To rolling torrents ſwell the creeping rills. DRYDEN.

But I am ſad, forlorn, and blind; and no more the companion of heroes. Give, lovely maid, to me thy tears, for I have ſeen the tombs of all my friends.

It was then by Fingal's hand a hero fell, to his grief. Gray-haired he rolled in the duſt, and lifted his faint eyes to the king. "And is it by me thou haſt fallen," ſaid the ſon of Comhal, "thou friend of Agandecca! I ſaw thy tears for the maid of my love in the halls of the bloody Starno. Thou haſt been the foe of the foes of my love, and haſt thou fallen by my hand? Raiſe, Ullin, raiſe the grave of the ſon of Mathon, and give his name to the ſong of Agandecca; for dear to my ſoul haſt thou been, thou darkly dwelling maid of Ardven."

Cuchullin, from the cave of Cromla, heard the noiſe of the troubled war. He called to Connal chief of ſwords, and Carril of other times. The gray-haired heroes heard his voice, and took their aſpen ſpears. They came, and ſaw the tide of battle, like the crowded waves of the ocean; when the dark wind blows from the deep, and rolls the billows through the ſandy vale.

Cuchullin kindled at the ſight, and darkneſs gathered on his brow. His hand is on the ſword of his fathers: his red rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to ruſh to battle, and thrice did Connal ſtop him. "Chief of the iſle of miſt," he ſaid, "Fingal ſubdues the foe. Seek not a part of the fame of the king; himſelf is like a ſtorm."

"Then, Carril, go," replied the chief, "and greet the king of Morven. When Lochlin falls away like a ſtream after rain, and the noiſe of the battle is over, then be thy voice ſweet in his ear to praiſe the king of ſwords. Give him the ſword of Caithbat; for Cuchullin is worthy no more to lift the arms of his fathers.

"But, O ye ghoſts of the lonely Cromla! ye ſouls of chiefs that are no more! be ye the companions of Cuchullin, and talk to him in the cave of his ſorrow.

For never more ſhall I be renowned among the mighty in the land. I am like a beam that has ſhone; like a miſt that fled away, when the blaſt of the morning came, and brightened the ſhaggy ſide of the hill. Connal, talk of arms no more: departed is my fame. My ſighs ſhall be on Cromla's wind, till my footſteps ceaſe to be ſeen. And thou, white-boſom'd Bragela, mourn over the fall of my fame; for, vanquiſhed, I will never return to thee, thou ſun-beam of Dunſcaich."

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT

EPIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Cuchullin and Connal ſtill remain on the hill. Fingal and Swaran meet; the combat is deſcribed. Swaran is overcome, bound and delivered over as a priſoner to the care of Oſſian, and Gaul the ſon of Morni; Fingal, his younger ſons, and Oſcar, ſtill purſue the enemy. The epiſode of Orla, a chief of Lochlin, who was mortally wounded in the battle, is introduced. Fingal, touched with the death of Orla, orders the purſuit to be diſcontinued; and calling his ſons together, he is informed that Ryno, the youngeſt of them, was killed. He laments his death, hears the ſtory of Lamderg and Gelchoſſa, and returns toward the place where he had left Swaran. Carril who had been ſent by Cuchullin to congratulate Fingal on his victory, comes in the mean time to Oſſian. The converſation of the two poets cloſes the action of the fourth day.

BOOK VI.†

Now Connal on Cromla's windy ſide, ſpoke to the chief of the noble car. Why that gloom, ſon of Semo? Our friends are the mighty in battle. And renowned art thou, O warrior! many were the deaths of thy ſteel. Often has Bragela met with blue-rolling eyes of joy, often has ſhe met her hero, returning in the midſt of the valiant; when his ſword was red with ſlaughter, and his foes ſilent in the fields of the tomb. Pleaſant to her ears were thy bards, when thine actions roſe in the ſong.

"But behold the king of Morven! He moves below like a pillar of fire. His ſtrength is like the ſtream of Lubar, or the wind of the echoing Cromla; when the branchy foreſts of night are overturned.

† The fourth day ſtill continues. The poet by putting the narration in the mouth of Connal, who ſtill remained with Cuchullin on the ſide of Cromla, gives propriety to the preſence of Fingal. The beginning of this book, in the original, is one of the moſt beautiful parts of the poem. The verſification is regular and full, and agrees very well with the ſedate character of Connal. No poet has adapted the cadence of his verſe more to the temper of the ſpeaker, than Oſſian has done. It is more than probable that the whole poem was originally deſigned to be ſung to the harp, as the verſification is ſo various, and ſo much ſuited to the different paſſions of the human mind.

Drawn by E. Birney. Glasgow Printed for James Imray, March 1799. Engraved by C. Warren, London.

"Happy are thy people, O Fingal, thine arm ſhall fight their battles! thou art the firſt in their dangers; the wiſeſt in the days of their peace. Thou ſpeakeſt and thy thouſands obey; and armies tremble at the ſound of thy ſteel. Happy are thy people, Fingal, chief of the lonely hills.

"Who is that ſo dark and terrible, coming in the thunder of his courſe? who is he but Swaran to meet the king of Morven? Behold the battle of the chiefs: it is like the ſtorm of the ocean, when two ſpirits meet far diſtant, and contend for the rolling of the wave. The hunter hears the noiſe on his hill; and ſees the high billows advancing to Ardven's ſhore."

Such were the words of Connal, when the heroes met in the midſt of their falling people. There was the clang of arms! there every blow, like the hundred hammers of the furnace! Terrible is the battle of the kings, and horrid the look of their eyes. Their dark-brown ſhields are cleft in twain; and their ſteel flies, broken, from their helmets. They fling their weapons down. Each ruſhes† to the graſp of his foe. Their ſinewy arms bend round each other: they turn from ſide to ſide, and ſtrain and ſtretch their large ſpreading limbs below. But when the pride of their ſtrength aroſe, they ſhook the hill with their heels; rocks tumble from their places on high; the green-headed buſhes are overturned. At length the ſtrength of Swaran fell; and the king of the groves is bound.

Thus have I ſeen on Cona; (but Cona I behold no more) thus have I ſeen two dark hills removed from their place by the ſtrength of the burſting ſtream. They turn from ſide to ſide, and their tall oaks meet one another on high. Then they fall together with all

† This paſſage reſembles one in the twenty-third Iliad.

Cloſe lock'd above their heads and arms are mixt;
Below their planted feet at diſtance fixt;
Now to the graſp each manly body bends;
The humid ſweat from ev'ry pore deſcends;
Their bones reſound with blows; ſides, ſhoulders, thighs,
Swell to each gripe, and bloody tumours riſe. POPE.

their rocks and trees. The ſtreams are turned by their ſides, and the red ruin is ſeen afar.

" Sons of the king of Morven," ſaid the noble Fingal, " guard the king of Lochlin; for he is ſtrong as his thouſand waves. His hand is taught to the battle, and his race of the times of old. Gaul, thou firſt of my heroes, and Oſſian king of ſongs, attend the friend of Agandecca, and raiſe to joy his grief. But, Oſcar, Fillan, and Ryno, ye children of the race! purſue the reſt of Lochlin over the heath of Lena; that no veſſel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Iniſtore."

They flew like lightning over the heath. He ſlowly moved as a cloud of thunder when the ſultry plain of ſummer is ſilent. His ſword is before him as a ſunbeam, terrible as the ſtreaming meteor of night. He came toward a chief of Lochlin, and ſpoke to the ſon of the wave.

" Who is that like a cloud at the rock of the roaring ſtream? He cannot bound over its courſe; yet ſtately is the chief! his boſſy ſhield is on his ſide; and his ſpear like the tree of the deſert. Youth of the dark brown hair, art thou of Fingal's foes?"

" I am a ſon of Lochlin," he cries, " and ſtrong is my arm in war. My ſpouſe is weeping at home, but Orla † will never return."

" Or fights or yields the hero," ſaid Fingal of the noble needs, " foes do not conquer in my preſence; but my friends are renowned in the hall. Son of the wave, follow me; partake the feaſt of my ſhells; purſue the deer of my deſert; and be the friend of Fingal."

" No," ſaid the hero, " I aſſiſt the feeble: my ſtrength ſhall remain with the weak in arms. My ſword

† The ſtory of Orla is ſo beautiful and affecting in the original, that many are in poſſeſſion of it in the north of Scotland, who never heard a ſyllable more of the poem. It varies the action, and awakes the attention of the reader, when he expected nothing but languor in the conduct of the poem, as the great action was over in the conqueſt of Swaran.

has been always unmatched, O warrior: let the king of Morven yield."

"I never yielded, Orla! Fingal never yielded to man. Draw thy sword and chuse thy foe. Many are my heroes."

"And does the king refuse the combat?" said Orla of the dark-brown hair. "Fingal is a match for Orla: and he alone of all his race. But, king of Morven, if I shall fall; (as one time the warrior must die;) raise my tomb in the midst, and let it be the greatest on Lena. And send, over the dark-blue wave, the sword of Orla to the spouse of his love, that she may shew it to her son, with tears, to kindle his soul to war."

"Son of the mournful tale," said Fingal, "why dost thou awaken my tears? One day the warriors must die, and the children see their useless arms in the hall. But Orla, thy tomb shall rise, and thy white-bosomed spouse weep over thy sword."

"They fought on the heath of Lena, but feeble was the arm of Orla. The sword of Fingal descended, and cleft his shield in twain. It fell and glittered on the ground, as the moon on the stream of night.

"King of Morven," said the hero, "lift thy sword and pierce my breast. Wounded and faint from battle, my friends have left me here. The mournful tale shall come to my love on the banks of the streamy Loda; when she is alone in the wood; and the rustling blast in the leaves."

"No;" said the king of Morven, "I will never wound thee, Orla. On the banks of Loda let her see thee escaped from the hands of war. Let thy gray-haired father, who, perhaps, is blind with age, hear the sound of thy voice in his hall. With joy let the hero rise, and search for his son with his hands."

"But never will he find him, Fingal;" said the youth of the streamy Loda. "On Lena's heath I shall die; and foreign bards will talk of me. My broad belt covers my wound of death. And now I give it to the wind."

The dark blood poured from his ſide, he fell pale on the heath of Lena. Fingal bends over him as he dies, and calls his younger heroes.

"Oſcar and Fillan, my ſons, raiſe high the memory of Orla. Here let the dark-haired hero reſt, far from the ſpouſe of his love. Here let him reſt in his narrow houſe, far from the ſound of Loda. The ſons of the feeble will find his bow at home, but will not be able to bend it. His faithful dogs howl on his hills, and his boars, which he uſed to purſue, rejoice. Fallen is the arm of battle; the mighty among the valiant is low!

"Exalt the voice, and blow the horn ye ſons of the king of Morven? let us go back to Swaran, and ſend the night away in ſong. Fillan, Oſcar, and Ryno, fly over the heath of Lena. Where, Ryno, art thou, young ſon of fame? Thou art not wont to be the laſt to anſwer thy father."

"Ryno," ſaid Ullin firſt of bards, "is with the awful forms of his fathers. With Trathal king of ſhields, and Trenmor of the mighty deeds. The youth is low, the youth is pale, he lies on Lena's heath."

"And fell the ſwifteſt in the race," ſaid the king, "the firſt to bend the bow? Thou ſcarce haſt been known to me: why did young Ryno fall? But ſleep thou ſoftly on Lena, Fingal ſhall ſoon behold thee. Soon ſhall my voice be heard no more, and my footſteps ceaſe to be ſeen. The bards will tell of Fingal's name; the ſtones will talk of me. But, Ryno, thou art low indeed, thou haſt not received thy fame. Ullin, ſtrike the harp for Ryno; tell what the chief would have been. Farewel, thou firſt in every field. No more ſhall I direct thy dart. Thou that haſt been ſo fair: I behold thee not. Farewel."

The tear is on the cheek of the king; for terrible was his ſon in war. His ſon! that was like a beam of fire by night on the hill; when the foreſts ſink down in its courſe, and the traveller trembles at the ſound.

"Whoſe fame is in that dark green tomb?" begun

the king of generous ſhells; "four ſtones with their heads of moſs ſtand there; and mark the narrow houſe of death. Near it let my Ryno reſt, and be the neighbour of the valiant. Perhaps ſome chief of fame is here to fly with my ſon on clouds. O Ullin, raiſe the ſongs of other times. Bring to memory the dark dwellers of the tomb. If in the field of the valiant they never fled from danger, my ſon ſhall reſt with them, far from his friends, on the heath of Lena."

"Here," ſaid the mouth of the ſong, "here reſt the firſt of heroes. Silent is Lamderg† in this tomb, and Ullin king of ſwords. And who, ſoft ſmiling from her cloud, ſhews me her face of love? Why, daughter, why ſo pale art thou, firſt of the maids of Cromla? Doſt thou ſleep with the foes in battle, Gelchoſſa, white-boſomed daughter of Tuathal? Thou haſt been the love of thouſands, but Lamderg was thy love. He came to Selma's moſſy towers, and, ſtriking his dark buckler, ſpoke."—

"Where is Gelchoſſa, my love, the daughter of the noble Tuathal? I left her in the hall of Selma, when I fought with the gloomy Ulfadda. Return ſoon, O Lamderg, ſhe ſaid, for here I am in the midſt of ſorrow. Her white breaſt roſe with ſighs. Her cheek was wet with tears. But I ſee her not coming to meet me; and to ſoothe my ſoul after battle. Silent is the hall of my joy; I hear not the voice of the bard. Bran‖ does not ſhake his chains at the gate, glad at the coming of Lamderg. Where is Gelchoſſa, my love, the mild daughter of the generous Tuathal?"

"Lamderg!" ſays Ferchios the ſon of Aidon, "Gelchoſſa may be on Cromla; ſhe and the maids of the bow purſuing the flying deer!"

"Ferchios!" replied the chief of Cromla, "no noiſe

† Lamh-dhearg ſignifies bloody hand. Gelchoſſa, 'white legged.' Tuathal, 'ſurly.' Ulfadda, 'long-beard.' Ferchios, 'the conqueror of men.'

‖ Bran is a common name of grey hounds to this day. It is a cuſtom in the north of Scotland, to give the names of the heroes mentioned in this poem to their dogs; a proof that they are familiar to the ear, and their fame generally known.

meets the ear of Lamderg. No ſound is in the woods of Lena. No deer fly in my ſight. No panting dog purſues. I ſee not Gelchoſſa my love, fair as the full moon ſetting on the hills of Cromla. Go, Ferchios, go to Allad†, the gray haired ſon of the rock. His dwelling is in the circle of ſtones. He may know of Gelchoſſa."

The ſon of Aidon went and ſpoke to the ear of age. "Allad: thou that dwelleſt in the rock, thou that trembleſt alone, what ſaw thine eyes of age?"

"I ſaw," anſwered Allad the old, "Ullin the ſon of Cairbar. He came like a cloud from Cromla; and he hummed a ſurly ſong like a blaſt in a leafleſs wood. He entered the hall of Selma. "Lamderg," he ſaid, "moſt dreadful of men, fight or yield to Ullin." "Lamderg," replied Gelchoſſa "the ſon of the battle is not here. He fights Ulfadda mighty chief. He is not here, thou firſt of men But Lamderg never yielded. He will fight the ſon of Cairbar."

"Lovely art thou," ſaid terrible Ullin, "daughter of the generous Tuathal. I carry thee to Cairbar's halls. The valiant ſhall have Gelchoſſa. Three days I remain on Cromla, to wait that ſon of battle, Lamderg. On the fourth Gelchoſſa is mine, if the mighty Lamderg flies."

"Allad!" ſaid the chief of Cromla, "peace to thy dreams in the cave. Ferchios, ſound the horn of Lamderg, that Ullin may hear on Cromla. Lamderg ‖, like a roaring ſtorm, aſcended the hill from Selma. He hummed a ſurly ſong as he went, like the noiſe of a falling ſtream. He ſtood like a cloud on the hill, that varies its form to the wind. He rolled a ſtone, the ſign of war. Ullin heard in Cairbar's hall. The hero heard,

† Allad is plainly a druid; he is called the ſon of the rock, from his dwelling in a cave; and the circle of ſtones here mentioned is the pale of the druidical temple. He is here conſulted as one who had a ſupernatural knowledge of things; from the druids, no doubt, came the ridiculous notion of the ſecond ſight, which prevailed in the Highlands and iſles.

‖ The reader will find this paſſage altered from what it was in the fragments of ancient poetry. It is delivered down very differently by tradition, and the tranſlator has choſen that reading which favours leaſt of bombaſt.

with joy, his foe, and took his father's ſpear. A ſmile brightens his dark-brown cheek, as he places his ſword by his ſide. The dagger glittered in his hand. He whiſtled as he went.

" Gelchoſſa ſaw the ſilent chief, as a wreath of miſt aſcending the hill. She ſtruck her white and heaving breaſt; and ſilent, tearful, feared for Lamderg.

" Cairbar, hoary chief of ſhells," ſaid the maid of the tender hand; " I muſt bend the bow on Cromla; for I ſee the dark brown hinds.

" She haſted up the hill. In vain! the gloomy heroes fought. Why ſhould I tell the king of Morven how wrathful heroes fight! Fierce Ullin fell. Young Lamderg came all pale to the daughter of generous Tuathal."

" What blood, my love," the ſoft haired woman ſaid, " what blood runs down my warrior's ſide!" " It is Ullin's blood," the chief replied, " thou fairer than the ſnow of Cromla! Gelchoſſa, let me reſt here a little while." The mighty Lamderg died.

" And ſleepeſt thou ſo ſoon on earth, O chief of ſhady Cromla? three days ſhe mourned beſide her love. The hunters found her dead. They raiſed this tomb above the three. Thy ſon, O king of Morven, may reſt here with heroes."

" And here my ſon ſhall reſt," ſaid Fingal, " the noiſe of their fame has reached my ears. Fillan and Fergus! bring hither Orla; the pale youth of the ſtream of Loda. Not unequalled ſhall Ryno lie in earth when Orla is by his ſide. Weep, ye daughters of Morven; and ye maids of the ſtreamy Loda. Like a tree they grew on the hills; and they have fallen like the oak † of the deſert; when it lies acroſs a ſtream, and withers in the wind of the mountain.

" Oſcar! chief of every youth! thou ſeeſt how they have fallen. Be thou, like them, on earth renowned,

† ----------as the mountain oak
Nods to the ax, till with a groaning ſound
It ſinks and ſpreads its honours on the ground. POPE.

Like them the ſong of bards. Terrible were their forms in battle; but calm was Ryno in the days of peace. He was like the bow of the ſhower ſeen far diſtant on the ſtream, when the ſun is ſetting on Mora, and ſilence on the hill of deer. Reſt, youngeſt of my ſons, reſt, O Ryno, on Lena. We too ſhall be no more; for the warrior one day muſt fall."

Such was thy grief, thou king of hills, when Ryno lay on earth. What muſt the grief of Oſſian be, for thou thyſelf art gone. I hear not thy diſtant voice on Cona. My eyes perceive thee not. Often forlorn and dark I ſit at thy tomb; and feel it with my hands. When I think I hear thy voice; it is but the blaſt of the deſert. Fingal has long ſince fallen aſleep, the ruler of the war.

Then Gaul and Oſſian ſat with Swaran on the ſoft green banks of Lubar. I touched the harp to pleaſe the king. But gloomy was his brow. He rolled his red eyes towards Lena. The hero mourned his people.

I lifted my eyes to Cromla, and I ſaw the ſon of generous Semo. Sad and ſlow he retired from his hill towards the lonely cave of Tura. He ſaw Fingal victorious, and mixed his joy with grief. The ſun is bright on his armour, and Connal ſlowly followed. They ſunk behind the hill like two pillars of the fire of night; when winds purſue them over the mountain, and the flaming heath reſounds. Beſide a ſtream of roaring foam his cave is in a rock. One tree bends above it; and the ruſhing winds echo againſt its ſides. Here reſts the chief of Dunſcaich, the ſon of generous Semo. His thoughts are on the battle he loſt; and the tear is on his cheek. He mourned the departure of his fame, that fled like the miſt of Cona. O Bragela, thou art too far remote to cheer the ſoul of the hero. But let him ſee thy bright form in his ſoul; that his thoughts may return to the lonely ſun-beam of Dunſcaich.

Who comes with the locks of age? It is the ſon of ſong. Hail, Carril of other times! thy voice is like

the harp in the halls of Tura. Thy words are pleaſant as the ſhower that falls on the fields of the ſun. Carril of the times of old, why comeſt thou from the ſon of the generous Semo?

"Oſſian, king of ſwords," replied the bard, "thou beſt raiſeſt the ſong. Long haſt thou been known to Carril, thou ruler of battles. Often have I touched the harp to lovely Everallin. Thou too haſt often accompanied my voice in Branno's hall of generous ſhells. And often, amidſt our voices, was heard the mildeſt Everallin. One day ſhe ſung of Cormac's fall, the youth that died for her love. I ſaw the tears on her cheek, and on thine, thou chief of men. Her ſoul was touched for the unhappy, though ſhe loved him not. How fair among a thouſand maids was the daughter of the generous Branno!"

"Bring not, Carril," I replied, "bring not her memory to my mind. My ſoul muſt melt at the remembrance. My eyes muſt have their tears. Pale in the earth is ſhe, the ſoftly bluſhing fair of my love. But ſit thou on the heath, O bard, and let us hear thy voice. It is pleaſant as the gale of ſpring that ſighs on the hunter's ear; when he wakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the muſic of the ſpirits of the hill."

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT

EPIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT

Night comes on. Fingal gives a feaſt to his army, at which Swaran is preſent. The king commands Ullin his bard to give the ſong of peace; a cuſtom always obſerved at the end of a war. Ullin relates the actions of Trenmor, great grandfather to Fingal, in Scandinavia, and his marriage with Inibaca, the daughter of a king of Lochlin who was anceſtor to Swaran; which conſideration, together with his being brother to Agandecca, with whom Fingal was in love in his youth, induced the king to releaſe him, and permit him to return, with the remains of his army, into Lochlin, upon his promiſe of never returning to Ireland in a hoſtile manner. The night is ſpent in ſettling Swaran's departure, in ſongs of bards, and in a converſation in which the ſtory of Grumal is introduced by Fingal. Morning comes. Swaran departs; Fingal goes on a hunting party, and finding Cuchullin in the cave of Tura, comforts him, and ſets ſail, the next day for Scotland; which concludes the poem.

BOOK VI.†.

THE clouds of night come rolling down, and reſt on Cromla's dark brown ſteep. The ſtars of the north ariſe over the rolling of the waves of Ullin; they ſhew their heads of fire through the flying miſt of heaven. A diſtant wind roars in the wood; but ſilent and dark is the plain of death.

Still on the darkening Lena aroſe in my ears the tuneful voice of Carril. He ſung of the companions of our youth, and the days of former years; when we met on the banks of Lego, and ſent round the joy of the ſhell. Cromla, with its cloudy ſteeps anſwered to his voice. The ghoſts of thoſe he ſung came in the ruſtling blaſts. They were ſeen to bend with joy towards the ſound of their praiſe.

Be thy ſoul bleſt, O Carril, in the midſt of thy eddying winds. O that thou wouldſt come to my hall,

† This book opens with the fourth night, and ends on the morning of the ſixth day. The time of five days, five nights, and a part of the ſixth day is taken up in the poem. The ſcene lies in the heath of Lena, and the mountain Cromla on the coaſt of Ulſter.

FINGAL, SHEWING SWARA
HELMET, TO CONBAN-CARGL
She saw [illegible] Helmet of Swara
She shrunk, da[illegible] from Fing

Drawn by R. Johnston. Glasgow. Printed for James Imray, March 1799. Engraved by C. Warren, London.

when I am alone by night! And thou doſt come, my friend, I hear often thy light hand on my harp: when it hangs on the diſtant wall, and the feeble ſound touches my ear. Why doſt thou not ſpeak to me in my grief, and tell when I ſhall behold my friends? But thou paſſeſt away in thy murmuring blaſt: and thy wind whiſtles through the gray hair of Oſſian.

Now on the ſide of Mora the heroes gathered to the feaſt. A thouſand aged oaks are burning to the wind. The ſtrength† of the ſhells goes round. And the ſouls of warriors brighten with joy. But the king of Lochlin is ſilent, and ſorrow reddens in the eyes of his pride. He often turned toward Lena and remembered that he fell.

Fingal leaned on the ſhield of his fathers. His gray locks ſlowly waved on the wind, and glittered to the beam of night. He ſaw the grief of Swaran and ſpoke to the firſt of bards.

"Raiſe, Ullin, raiſe the ſong of peace, and ſoothe my ſoul after battle, that my ear may forget the noiſe of arms. And let a hundred harps be near to gladden the king of Lochlin. He muſt depart from us with joy.—None ever went ſad from Fingal. Oſcar! the lightning of my ſword is againſt the ſtrong in battle; but peaceful it lies by my ſide when warriors yield in war."

"Trenmor‖," ſaid the mouth of the ſongs, "lived in the days of other years. He bounded over the waves of the north; companion of the ſtorm. The high rocks of the land of Lochlin, and its groves of murmuring ſounds appear to the hero through the miſt; he

† By the ſtrength of the ſhell is meant the liquor the heroes drunk; of what kind it was, cannot be aſcertained at this diſtance of time. The tranſlator has met with ſeveral ancient poems, that mention wax-lights and wine as common in the halls of Fingal. The names of both are borrowed from the Latin, which plainly ſhews that our anceſtors had them from the Romans, if they had them at all. The Caledonians in their frequent incurſions to the province, might become acquainted with thoſe conveniencies of life, and introduce them into their own country, among the booty which they carried from South Britain.

‖ Trenmor was great grandfather to Fingal. The ſtory is introduced to facilitate the diſmiſſion of Swaran.

bound his white-boſomed ſails. Trenmor purſued the boar that roared along the woods of Gormal. Many had fled from its preſence; but the ſpear of Trenmor ſlew it.

"Three chiefs, that beheld the deed, told of the mighty ſtranger. They told that he ſtood like a pillar of fire in the bright arms of his valour. The king of Lochlin prepared the feaſt, and called the blooming Trenmor. Three days he feaſted at Gormal's windy towers; and got his choice in the combat.

"The land of Lochlin had no hero that yielded not to Trenmor. The ſhell of joy went round with ſongs in praiſe of the king of Morven; he that came over the waves, the firſt of mighty men.

"Now when the fourth gray morn aroſe, the hero launched his ſhip; and walking along the ſilent ſhore waited for the ruſhing wind. For loud and diſtant he heard the blaſt murmuring in the grove.

"Covered over with arms of ſteel a ſon of the woody Gormal appeared. Red was his cheek and fair his hair. His ſkin like the ſnow of Morven. Mild rolled his blue and ſmiling eye when he ſpoke to the king of ſwords.

"Stay, Trenmor, ſtay thou firſt of men, thou haſt not conquered Lonval's ſon. My ſword has often met the brave. And the wife ſhun the ſtrength of my bow."

"Thou fair-haired youth," Trenmor replied, "I will not fight with Lonval's ſon. Thine arm is feeble, ſun-beam of beauty. Retire to Gormal's dark-brown hinds.

"But I will retire," replied the youth, "with the ſword of Trenmor; and exult in the ſound of my fame. The virgins ſhall gather with ſmiles around him who conquered Trenmor. They ſhall ſigh with the ſighs of love, and admire the length of thy ſpear; when I ſhall carry it among thouſands, and lift the glittering point to the ſun."

"Thou ſhalt never carry my ſpear," ſaid the angry

king of Morven. "Thy mother ſhall find thee pale on the ſhore of the echoing Gormal; and looking over the dark-blue deep, ſee the ſails of him that ſlew her ſon."

"I will not lift the ſpear," replied the youth, "my arm is not ſtrong with years. But with the feathered dart I have learned to pierce a diſtant foe. Throw down that heavy mail of ſteel; for Trenmor is covered all over. I firſt will lay my mail on earth. Throw now thy dart, thou king of Morven."

He ſaw the heaving of her breaſt. It was the ſiſter of the king. She had ſeen him in the halls of Gormal; and loved his face of youth. The ſpear dropt from the hand of Trenmor! he bent his red cheek to the ground, for he had ſeen her like a beam of light that meets the ſons of the cave, when they reviſit the fields of the ſun, and bend their aching eyes.

"Chief of the windy Morven," begun the maid of the arms of ſnow; "let me reſt in thy bounding ſhip, far from the love of Corla. For he, like the thunder of the deſert, is terrible to Inibaca. He loves me in the gloom of his pride, and ſhakes ten thouſand ſpears!"

"Reſt thou in peace," ſaid the mighty Trenmor, "behind the ſhield of my fathers. I will not fly from the chief, though he ſhakes ten thouſand ſpears."

Three days he waited on the ſhore; and ſent his horn abroad. He called Corla to battle from all his echoing hills. But Corla came not to battle. The king of Lochlin deſcended. He feaſted on the roaring ſhore; and gave the maid to Trenmor."

"King of Lochlin," ſaid Fingal, "thy blood flows in the veins of thy foe. Our families met in battle, becauſe they loved the ſtrife of ſpears. But often did they feaſt in the hall, and ſend round the joy of the ſhell. Let thy face brighten with gladneſs, and thine ear delight in the harp. Dreadful as the ſtorm of thine ocean thou haſt poured thy valour forth: thy voice has been like the voice of thouſands when they engage in battle. Raiſe, to-morrow, thy white ſails to the wind,

thou brother of Agandecca. Bright as the beam of noon ſhe comes on my mournful ſoul. I ſaw thy tears for the fair one, and ſpared thee in the halls of Starno; when my ſword was red with ſlaughter, and my eye full of tears for the maid. Or doſt thou chuſe the fight? The combat which thy fathers gave to Trenmor is thine. That thou mayeſt depart renowned like the ſun ſetting in the weſt."

"King of the race of Morven," ſaid the chief of the waves of Lochlin; "never will Swaran fight with thee, firſt of a thouſand heroes! I ſaw thee in the halls of Starno, and few were thy years beyond my own. When ſhall I, ſaid I to my ſoul, lift the ſpear like the noble Fingal? We have fought heretofore, O warrior, on the ſide of the ſhaggy Malmor; after my waves had carried me to thy halls, and the feaſt of a thouſand ſhells was ſpread. Let the bards ſend his fame who overcame to future years, for noble was the ſtrife of Malmor.

"But many of the ſhips of Lochlin have loſt their youths on Lena. Take theſe, thou king of Morven, and be the friend of Swaran: And when thy ſons ſhall come to the moſſy towers of Gormal, the feaſt of ſhells ſhall be ſpread, and the combat offered on the vale."

"Nor ſhip," replied the king, "ſhall Fingal take, nor land of many hills. The deſert is enough to me, with all its deer and woods. Riſe on thy waves again, thou noble friend of Agandecca. Spread thy white ſails to the beam of the morning, and return to the echoing hills of Gormal."

"Bleſt be thy ſoul, thou king of ſhells," ſaid Swaran of the dark-brown ſhield. "In peace thou art the gale of ſpring. In war the mountain ſtorm. Take now my hand in friendſhip thou noble king of Morven. Let thy bards mourn thoſe who fell. Let Erin give the ſons of Lochlin to earth; and raiſe the moſſy ſtones of their fame. That the children of the north hereafter may behold the place where their fathers fought. And

ſome hunter may ſay, when he leans on a moſſy tomb, here Fingal and Swaran fought, the heroes of other years. Thus hereafter ſhall he ſay, and our fame ſhall laſt for ever!"

"Swaran," ſaid the king of the hills, "to-day our fame is greateſt. We ſhall paſs away like a dream. No ſound will be in the fields of our battles. Our tombs will be loſt in the heath. The hunter ſhall not know the place of our reſt. Our names may be heard in ſong, but the ſtrength of our arms will ceaſe. O Oſſian, Carril and Ullin, you know of heroes that are no more. Give us the ſong of other years. Let the night paſs away on the ſound, and morning return with joy."

We gave the ſong to the kings, and an hundred harps accompanied our voice. The face of Swaran brightened like the full moon of heaven, when the clouds vaniſh away, and leave her calm and broad in the midſt of the ſky.

It was then that Fingal ſpoke to Carril the chief of other times. "Where is the ſon of Semo; the king of the iſle of miſt? has he retired like the meteor of death, to the dreary cave of Tura?"

"Cuchullin," ſaid Carril of other times, "lies in the dreary cave of Tura. His hand is on the ſword of his ſtrength. His thoughts on the battle which he loſt. Mournful is the king of ſpears; for he has often been victorious. He ſends the ſword of his war to reſt on the ſide of Fingal For, like the ſtorm of the deſert, thou haſt ſcattered all his foes. Take, O Fingal, the ſword of the hero; for his fame is departed like miſt when it flies before the ruſtling wind of the vale."

"No;" replied the king, "Fingal ſhall never take his ſword. His arm is mighty in war; his fame ſhall never fail. Many have been overcome in battle, that have ſhone afterwards like the ſun of heaven.

"O Swaran, king of the reſounding woods, give all thy grief away. The vanquiſhed, if brave, are renown-

ed; they are like the ſun in a cloud when he hides his face in the ſouth, but looks again on the hills of graſs.

" Grumal was a chief of Cona. He fought the battle on every coaſt. His ſoul rejoiced in blood; his ear in the din of arms. He poured his warriors on the ſounding Craca; and Craca's king met him from his grove; for then within the circle of Brumo † he ſpoke to the ſtone of power.

" Fierce was the battle of the heroes, for the maid of the breaſt of ſnow. The fame of the daughter of Craca had reached Grumal at the ſtreams of Cona; he vowed to have the white-boſomed maid, or die on the echoing Craca; Three days they ſtrove together, and Grumal on the fourth was bound.

" Far from his friends they placed him in the horrid circle of Brumo; where often, they ſaid, the ghoſts of the dead howled round the ſtone of their fear. But afterwards he ſhone like a pillar of the light of heaven. They fell by his mighty hand, and Grumal had his fame.

" Raiſe ye bards of other times, raiſe high the praiſe of heroes; that my ſoul may ſettle on their fame; and the mind of Swaran ceaſe to be ſad."

They lay in the heath of Mora; the dark winds ruſtled over the heroes. A hundred voices at once aroſe, a hundred harps were ſtrung; they ſung of other times, and the mighty chiefs of former years.

When now ſhall I hear the bard; or rejoice at the fame of my fathers? The harp is not ſtrung on Morven; nor the voice of muſic raiſed on Cona. Dead with the mighty is the bard; and fame is in the deſert no more.

Morning trembles with the beam of the eaſt, and glimmers on gray-headed Cromla. Over Lena is heard the horn of Swaran, and the ſons of the ocean gather around. Silent and ſad they mount the wave, and the blaſt of Ullin is behind their ſails. White, as the miſt of Morven, they float along the ſea.

† This paſſage alludes to the religion of the king of Craca. See a note on a ſimilar ſubject in the third book.

"Call," ſaid Fingal, "call my dogs, the long-bounding ſons of the chaſe. Call white-breaſted Bran; and the ſurly ſtrength of Luath. Fillan, and Ryno, but he is not here! My ſon reſts on the bed of death. Fillan and Fergus, blow my horn, that the joy of the chaſe may ariſe; that the deer of Cromla may hear and ſtart at the lake of roes."

The ſhrill ſound ſpreads along the wood. The ſons of heathy Cromla ariſe. A thouſand dogs fly off at once, gray-bounding through the heath. A deer fell by every dog, and three by the white-breaſted Bran. He brought them, in their flight, to Fingal, that the joy of the king might be great.

One deer fell at the tomb of Ryno; and the grief of Fingal returned. He ſaw how peaceful lay the ſtone of him who was the firſt at the chaſe. "No more ſhalt thou riſe, O my ſon, to partake of the feaſt of Cromla. Soon will thy tomb be hid, and the graſs grow rank on thy grave. The ſons of the feeble ſhall paſs over it, and ſhall not know that the mighty lie there.

"Oſſian and Fillan, ſons of my ſtrength, and Gaul king of the blue ſwords of war, let us aſcend the hill to the cave of Tura, and find the chief of the battles of Erin. Are theſe the walls of Tura? gray and lonely they riſe on the heath. The king of ſhells is ſad, and the halls are deſolate. Come, let us find the king of ſwords, and give him all our joy. But is that Cuchullin, O Fillan, or a pillar of ſmoke on the heath? The wind of Cromla is on my eyes, and I diſtinguiſh not my friend."

"Fingal!" replied the youth, "it is the ſon of Semo. Gloomy and ſad is the hero; his hand is on his ſword. Hail to the ſon of battle, breaker of the ſhields!"

"Hail to thee!" replied Cuchullin, "hail to all the ſons of Morven! Delightful is thy preſence, O Fingal, it is like the ſun on Cromla; when the hunter mourns his abſence for a ſeaſon, and ſees him between the clouds. Thy ſons are like ſtars that attend thy courſe, and give light in the night. It is not thus thou haſt

ſeen me, O Fingal, returning from the wars of the deſert; when the kings of the world † had fled, and joy returned to the hill of hinds."

"Many are thy words, Cuchullin," ſaid Connan ‖ of ſmall renown. "Thy words are many, ſon of Semo, but where are thy deeds in arms? Why did we come over the ocean to aid thy feeble ſword? Thou flyeſt to thy cave of ſorrow, and Connan fights thy battles: Reſign to me theſe arms of light; yield them, thou ſon of Erin."

"No hero," replied the chief, "ever fought the arms of Cuchullin; and had a thouſand heroes fought them it were in vain, thou gloomy youth. I fled not to the cave of ſorrow, as long as Erin's warriors lived."

"Youth of the feeble arm," ſaid Fingal, "Connan, ſay no more. Cuchullin is renowned in battle, and terrible over the deſert. Often have I heard thy fame, thou ſtormy chief of Innis-fail. Spread now thy white ſails for the iſle of miſt, and ſee Bragela leaning on her rock. Her tender eye is in tears, and the winds lift her long hair from her heaving breaſt. She liſtens to the winds of night to hear the voice of thy rowers ¶; to hear the ſong of the ſea, and the ſound of thy diſtant harp."

"And long ſhall ſhe liſten in vain; Cuchullin ſhall never return How can I behold Bragela to raiſe the ſigh of her breaſt? Fingal, I was always victorious in the battles of other ſpears!"

"And hereafter thou ſhalt be victorious," ſaid Fingal king of ſhells. "The fame of Cuchullin ſhall grow like the branchy tree of Cromla. Many battles await thee, O chief, and many ſhall be the wounds of thy hand. Bring hither, Oſcar, the deer, and prepare the

† This is the only paſſage in the poem, wherein the wars of Fingal againſt the Romans are alluded to: The Roman emperor is diſtinguiſhed in old compoſitions by the title of the king of the world.

‖ Connan was of the family of Morni. He is mentioned in ſeveral other poems, and always appears with the ſame character. The poet paſſed him over in ſilence till now, and his behaviour here deſerves no better uſage.

¶ The practice of ſinging when they row is univerſal among the inhabitants of the north-weſt coaſt of Scotland and the iſles. It deceives time, and inſpirits the rowers.

feaſt of ſhells; that our ſouls may rejoice after danger, and our friends delight in our preſence."

We ſat, we feaſted, and we ſung. The ſoul of Cuchullin roſe. The ſtrength of his arm returned; and gladneſs brightened on his face. Ullin gave the ſong, and Carril raiſed the voice. I often joined the bards, and ſung of battles of the ſpear. Battles! where I often fought: but now I fight no more. The fame of my former actions is ceaſed; and I ſit forlorn at the tombs of my friends.

Thus they paſſed the night in the ſong; and brought back the morning with joy. Fingal aroſe on the heath, and ſhook his glittering ſpear. He moved firſt toward the plains of Lena, and we followed like a ridge of fire. "Spread the ſail," ſaid the king of Morven, "and catch the winds that pour from Lena." We roſe on the wave with ſongs, and ruſhed, with joy, through the foam of the ocean.

COMALA:

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

This poem is valuable on account of the light it throws on the antiquity of Offian's compoſitions. The Caracul mentioned here, is the ſame with Caracalla the ſon of Severus, who in the year 211 commanded an expedition againſt the Caledonians. The variety of the meaſure ſhews that the poem was originally ſet to muſic, and perhaps preſented before the chiefs upon ſolemn occaſions. Tradition has handed down the ſtory more complete than it is in the poem. "Comala, the daughter of Sarno king of Iniſtore or Orkney iſlands, fell in love with Fingal the ſon of Comhal at a feaſt, to which her father had invited him, (Fingal, B. III.) upon his return from Lochlin, after the death of Agandecca. Her paſſion was ſo violent, that ſhe followed him, diſguiſed like a youth, who wanted to be employed in his wars. She was ſoon diſcovered by Hidallan the ſon of Lamor, one of Fingal's heroes, whoſe love ſhe had ſlighted ſome time before. Her romantic paſſion and beauty recommended her ſo much to the king, that he had reſolved to make her his wife; when news was brought him of Caracul's expedition. He marched to ſtop the progreſs of the enemy, and Comala attended him. He left her on a hill, within ſight of Caracul's army, when he himſelf went to battle, having previouſly promiſed, if he ſurvived, to return that night." The ſequel of the ſtory may be gathered from the poem itſelf.

THE PERSONS.

FINGAL.
HIDALLAN.
COMALA.
MELILCOMA. } daughters of MORNI.
DERSAGRENA. }
BARDS.

DERSAGRENA.

THE chaſe is over. No noiſe on Ardven but the torrent's roar! Daughter of Morni, come from Crona's banks. Lay down the bow and take the harp. Let the night come on with ſongs, and our joy be great on Ardven.

† *Melil.* And night comes on, thou blue-eyed maid, gray night grows dim along the plain. I ſaw a deer at Crona's ſtream; a moſſy bank he ſeemed through

† Melilcoma, 'ſoft-rolling eye.'

the gloom, but ſoon he bounded away. A meteor played round his branchy horns; and the awful faces of other times looked from the clouds of Crona.

‖ *Derſa.* Theſe are the ſigns of Fingal's death. The king of ſhields is fallen! and Caracul prevails. Riſe, Comala ¶, from thy rocks; daughter of Sarno, riſe in tears. The youth of thy love is low, and his ghoſt is already on our hills.

Melil. There Comala ſits forlorn! two gray dogs near, ſhake their rough ears, and catch the flying breeze. Her red cheek reſts on her arm, and the mountain wind is in her hair. She turns her blue-rolling eyes towards the field of his promiſe. Where art thou, O Fingal, for the night is gathering around?

Comala. O Carun * of the ſtreams! why do I behold thy waters rolling in blood? Has the noiſe of the battle been heard on thy banks; and ſleeps the king of Morven? Riſe, moon, thou daughter of the ſky! look from between thy clouds, that I may behold the light of his ſteel, on the field of his promiſe. Or rather let the meteor, that lights our departed fathers through the night, come with its red light, to ſhew me the way to my fallen hero. Who will defend me from ſorrow? Who from the love of Hidallan? Long ſhall Comala look before ſhe can behold Fingal in the midſt of his hoſt; bright as the beam of the morning in the cloud of an early ſhower.

† *Hidal.* Roll, thou miſt of gloomy Crona, roll on the path of the hunter. Hide his ſteps from mine eyes, and let me remember my friend no more. The bands of battle are ſcattered, and no crowding ſteps are round

‖ Derſagrena, 'the brightneſs of a ſun-beam.'

¶ Comala, 'the maid of the pleaſant brow.'

* Carun, or Cra'on, 'a winding river.' This river retains ſtill the name of Carron, and falls into the Forth ſome miles to the north of Falkirk.

† Hidallan was ſent by Fingal to give notice to Comala of his return; he, to revenge himſelf on her for ſlighting his love ſometime before, told her that the king was killed in battle. He even pretended that he carried his body from the field to be buried in her preſence; and this circumſtance makes it probable that the poem was preſented of old.

the noiſe of his ſteel. O Carun, roll thy ſtreams of blood, for the chief of the people fell.

Comala. Who fell on Carun's graſſy banks, ſon of the cloudy night? Was he white as the ſnow of Ardven? Blooming as the bow of the ſhower? Was his hair like the miſt of the hill, ſoft and curling in the day of the ſun? Was he like the thunder of heaven in battle? Fleet as the roe of the deſert?

Hidal. O that I might behold his love, fair-leaning from her rock! Her red eye dim in tears, and her bluſhing cheek half hid in her locks! Blow, thou gentle breeze, and lift the heavy locks of the maid, that I may behold her white arm, and lovely cheek of her ſorrow!

Comala. And is the ſon of Comhal fallen, chief of the mournful tale? The thunder rolls on the hill! The lightning flies on wings of fire! But they frighten not Comala; for her Fingal fell. Say, chief of the mournful tale, fell the breaker of ſhields?

Hidal. The nations are ſcattered on their hills: for they ſhall hear the voice of the chief no more.

Comala. Confuſion purſue thee over thy plains; and deſtruction overtake thee, thou king of the world. Few be thy ſteps to thy grave; and let one virgin mourn thee. Let her be, like Comala, tearful in the days of her youth. Why haſt thou told me, Hidallan, that my hero fell? I might have hoped a little while his return, and have thought I ſaw him on the diſtant rock; a tree might have deceived me with his appearance; and the wind of the hill been the ſound of his horn in mine ear. O that I were on the banks of Carun! that my tears might be warm on his cheek!

Hidal. He lies not on the banks of Carun: on Ardven, heroes raiſe his tomb. Look on them, O moon, from thy clouds; be thy beam bright on his breaſt, that Comala may behold him in the light of his armour.

Comala. Stop, ye ſons of the grave, till I behold my

love. He left me at the chaſe alone. I knew not that he went to war. He ſaid he would return with the night; and the king of Morven is not returned! Why didſt thou not tell me that he would fall, O trembling ſon of the rock*? Thou haſt ſeen him in the blood of his youth, but thou didſt not tell Comala.

Melil. What ſound is that on Ardven? Who is that bright in the vale? Who comes like the ſtrength of rivers, when their crowded waters glitter to the moon?

Comala. Who is it but the foe of Comala, the ſon of the king of the world! Ghoſt of Fingal! do thou, from thy cloud, direct Comala's bow. Let him fall like the hart of the deſert. It is Fingal in the crowd of his ghoſts. Why doſt thou come, my love, to frighten and pleaſe my ſoul?

Fingal. Raiſe, ye bards of the ſong, the wars of the ſtreamy Carun. Caracul has fled from my arms along the fields of his pride. He ſets far diſtant like a meteor that incloſes a ſpirit of night, when the winds drive it over the heath, and the dark woods are gleaming around. I heard a voice like the breeze of my hills. Is it the huntreſs of Galmal, the white-handed daughter of Sarno? Look from thy rocks, my love; and let me hear the voice of Comala.

Comala. Take me to the cave of thy reſt, O lovely ſon of death!

Fingal. Come to the cave of my reſt. The ſtorm is over, and the ſun is on our fields. Come to the cave of my reſt, huntreſs of echoing Cona.

Comala. He is returned with his fame; I feel the right hand of his battles. But I muſt reſt beſide the rock till my ſoul ſettle from fear. Let the harp be near; and raiſe the ſong, ye daughters of Morni.

Derſa. Comala has ſlain three deer on Ardven, and

* By the ſon of the rock ſhe means a druid. It is probable that ſome of the order of the druids remained as late as the beginning of the reign of Fingal; and that Comala had conſulted one of them concerning the event of the war with Caracul.

the fire aſcends on the rock; go to the feaſt of Comala, king of the woody Morven!

Fingal. Raiſe, ye ſons of ſong, the wars of the ſtreamy Carun; that my white-handed maid may rejoice: while I behold the feaſt of my love.

Bards. Roll, ſtreamy Carun, roll in joy, the ſons of battle fled. The ſteed is not ſeen on our fields; and the wings ¶ of their pride ſpread in other lands. The ſun will now riſe in peace, and the ſhadows deſcend in joy. The voice of the chaſe will be heard; and the ſhields hang in the hall. Our delight will be in the war of the ocean, and our hands be red in the blood of Lochlin. Roll, ſtreamy Carun, roll in joy, the ſons of battle fled.

Melil. Deſcend, ye light miſts from high; ye moon-beams, lift her ſoul. Pale lies the maid at the rock! Comala is no more!

Fingal. Is the daughter of Sarno dead; the white-boſomed maid of my love? Meet me, Comala, on my heaths, when I ſit alone at the ſtreams of my hills.

Hidal. Ceaſed the voice of the huntreſs of Galmal? Why did I trouble the ſoul of the maid? When ſhall I ſee thee, with joy, in the chaſe of the dark-brown hinds?

Fingal. Youth of the gloomy brow; no more ſhalt thou feaſt in my halls. Thou ſhalt not purſue my chaſe, and my foes ſhall not fall by thy ſword †. Lead me to the place of her reſt that I may behold her beauty. Pale ſhe lies at the rock, and the cold winds lift her hair. Her bow-ſtring ſounds in the blaſt, and her arrow was broken in her fall. Raiſe the praiſe of the daughter of Sarno, and give her name to the wind of the hills.

Bards. See! meteors roll around the maid; and moon-beams lift her ſoul! Around her, from their

¶ Perhaps the poet alludes to the Roman eagle.

† The ſequel of the ſtory of Hidallan is introduced, as an epiſode, in the poem which immediately follows in this collection.

clouds, bend the awful faces of her fathers; Sarno || of the gloomy brow; and the red-rolling eyes of Fidallan. When ſhall thy white hand ariſe, and thy voice be heard on our rocks? The maids ſhall ſeek thee on the heath, but they will not find thee. Thou ſhalt come, at times, to their dreams, and ſettle peace in their ſoul. Thy voice ſhall remain in their ears, and they ſhall think with joy on the dreams of their reſt. Meteors roll around the maid, and moon-beams lift her ſoul!

|| Sarno the father of Comala died ſoon after the flight of his daughter. Fidallan was the firſt king that reigned in Iniſtore.

THE

WAR OF CAROS:

A POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Caros is probably the noted uſurper Carauſius, by birth a Menapian, who aſſumed the purple in the year 284; and, ſeizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius in ſeveral naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called in this poem the king of ſhips. He repaired Agricola's wall, in order to obſtruct the incurſions of the Caledonians; and when he was employed in that work, it appears he was attacked by a party under the command of Oſcar the ſon of Oſſian. This battle is the foundation of the preſent poem, which is addreſſed to Malvina the daughter of Toſcar.

BRING, daughter of Toſcar, bring the harp; the light of the ſong riſes in Oſſian's ſoul. It is like the field, when darkneſs covers the hills around, and the ſhadow grows ſlowly on the plain of the ſun.

I behold my ſon, O Malvina, near the moſſy rock of Crona †. But it is the miſt of the deſert tinged with the beam of the weſt: Lovely is the miſt that aſſumes the form of Oſcar! turn from it ye winds, when ye roar on the ſide of Ardven.

Who comes towards my ſon, with the murmur of a ſong? His ſtaff is in his hand, his gray hair looſe on the wind. Surely joy lightens his face; and he often looks back to Caros. It is Ryno ¶ of the ſong, he that went to view the foe.

"What does Caros king of ſhips?" ſaid the ſon of the now mournful Oſſian; "ſpreads he the wings ‖ of his pride, bard of the times of old?"

"He ſpreads them, Oſcar," replied the bard, "but it is behind his gathered heap *. He looks over his

† Crona is the name of a ſmall ſtream which runs into the Carron. On its banks is the ſcene of the preceding dramatic poem.

¶ Ryno is often mentioned in the ancient poetry. He ſeems to have been a bard of the firſt rank, in the days of Fingal.

‖ The Roman eagle.

* Agricola's wall, which Carauſius repaired.

ſtones with fear, and beholds thee, terrible, as the ghoſt of night that rolls the wave to his ſhips."

"Go, thou firſt of my bards," ſays Oſcar, "and take the ſpear of Fingal. Fix a flame on its point, and ſhake it to the winds of heaven. Bid him in ſongs to advance, and leave the rolling of his wave. Tell to Caros that I long for battle; and that my bow is weary of the chaſe of Cona. Tell him the mighty is not here; and that my arm is young."

He went with the ſound of his ſong. Oſcar reared his voice on high. It reached his heroes on Ardven, like the noiſe of a cave, when the ſea of Togorma rolls before it: and its trees meet the roaring winds. They gather round my ſon like the ſtreams of the hill; when, after rain, they roll in the pride of their courſe.

Ryno came to the mighty Caros, and ſtruck his flaming ſpear. "Come to the battle of Oſcar, O thou that ſitteſt on the rolling of waters. Fingal is diſtant far; he hears the ſongs of his bards on Morven: and the wind of his hall is in his hair. His terrible ſpear is at his ſide; and his ſhield that is like the darkened moon. Come to the battle of Oſcar; the hero is alone."

He came not over the ſtreamy Carun†; the bard returned with his ſong. Gray night grows dim on Crona. The feaſt of ſhells is ſpread. A hundred oaks burn to the wind, and faint light gleams over the heath. The ghoſts of Ardven paſs through the beam, and ſhew their dim and diſtant forms. Comala ‖ is half unſeen on her meteor; and Hidallan is ſullen and dim, like the darkened moon behind the miſt of night.

"Why art thou ſad?" ſaid Ryno; for he alone beheld the chief. "Why art thou ſad, Hidallan, haſt thou not received thy fame? The ſongs of Oſſian have been heard, and thy ghoſt has brightened in the wind,

† The river Carron.

‖ This is the ſcene of Comala's death, which is the ſubject of the dramatic poem. The poet mentions her in this place, in order to introduce the ſequel of Hidallan's ſtory, who, on account of her death, had been expelled from the wars of Fingal.

when thou didſt bend from thy cloud to hear the ſong of Morven's bard."

"And do thine eyes behold the hero," ſaid Oſcar, "like the dim meteor of night? Say, Ryno, ſay, how fell the chief that was ſo renowned in the days of our fathers? His name remains on the rocks of Cona; and I have often ſeen the ſtreams of his hills."

Fingal, replied the bard, had driven Hidallan from his wars. The king's ſoul was ſad for Comala, and his eyes could not behold Hidallan. Lonely, ſad, along the heath, he ſlowly moved with ſilent ſteps. His arms hang diſordered on his ſide. His hair flies looſe from his helmet. The tear is in his down-caſt eyes; and the ſigh half ſilent in his breaſt. Three days he ſtrayed unſeen, alone, before he came to Lamor's halls; the moſſy halls of his fathers, at the ſtream of Balva †. There Lamor ſat alone beneath a tree; for he had ſent his people with Hidallan to war. The ſtream ran at his feet, and his gray head reſted on his ſtaff. Sightleſs are his aged eyes. He hums the ſong of other times. The noiſe of Hidallan's feet came to his ear: he knew the tread of his ſon.

"Is the ſon of Lamor returned; or is it the ſound of his ghoſt? Haſt thou fallen on the banks of Carun, ſon of the aged Lamor? Or, if I hear the ſound of Hidallan's feet; where are the mighty in war? Where are my people, Hidallan, that were wont to return with their echoing ſhields? Have they fallen on the banks of Carun?"

"No," replied the ſighing youth, "the people of Lamor live. They are renowned in battle, my father; but Hidallan is renowned no more. I muſt ſit alone on the banks of Balva, when the roar of the battle grows."

"But my fathers never ſat alone," replied the riſing pride of Lamor. "They never ſat alone on the banks

† This is perhaps that ſmall ſtream ſtill retaining the name of Balva, which runs through the romantic valley of Glentivar in Stirlingſhire. Balva ſignifies a ſilent ſtream, and Glentivar, the ſequeſtered vale.

of Balva, when the roar of battle roſe. Doſt thou not behold that tomb? Mine eyes diſcern it not: there reſts the noble Garmallon who never fled from war. Come, thou renowned in battle, he ſays, come to thy father's tomb. How am I renowned, Garmallon? my ſon has fled from war!"

"King of the ſtreamy Balva!" ſaid Hidallan with a ſigh, "why doſt thou torment my ſoul? Lamor, I never feared. Fingal was ſad for Comala, and denied his wars to Hidallan: Go to the gray ſtreams of thy land, he ſaid, and moulder like a leafleſs oak, which the winds have bent over Balva, never more to grow!"

"And muſt I hear," Lamor replied, "the lonely tread of Hidallan's feet? When thouſands are renowned in battle, ſhall he bend over my gray ſtreams? Spirit of the noble Garmallon! carry Lamor to his place: his eyes are dark; his ſoul is ſad: and his ſon has loſt his fame!"

"Where," ſaid the youth, "ſhall I ſearch for fame to gladden the ſoul of Lamor? From whence ſhall I return with renown, that the ſound of my arms may be pleaſant in his ear? If I go to the chaſe of hinds, my name will not be heard. Lamor will not feel my dogs, with his hands, glad at my arrival from the hill. He will not enquire of his mountains, or of the dark-brown deer of his deſerts."

"I muſt fall," ſaid Lamor, "like a leafleſs oak: it grew on a rock, but the winds have overturned it. My ghoſt will be ſeen on my hills, mournful for my young Hidallan. Will not ye, ye miſts, as ye riſe, hide him from my ſight? My ſon! go to Lamor's hall: there the arms of our fathers hang. Bring the ſword of Garmallon; he took it from a foe."

He went and brought the ſword with all its ſtudded thongs. He gave it to his father. The gray-haired hero felt the point with his hand.

"My ſon! lead me to Garmallon's tomb: it riſes beſide that ruſtling tree. The long graſs is withered; I

heard the breeze whiſtling there. A little fountain murmurs near, and ſends its water to Balva There let me reſt; it is noon: and the ſun is on our fields."

He led him to Garmallon's tomb. Lamor pierced the ſide of his ſon. They ſleep together; and their ancient halls moulder on Balva's banks. Ghoſts are ſeen there at noon: the valley is ſilent, and the people ſhun the place of Lamor.

"Mournful is thy tale," ſaid Oſcar, "ſon of the times of old! My ſoul ſighs for Hidallan; he fell in the days of his youth. He flies on the blaſt of the deſert, and his wandering is in a foreign land. Sons of the echoing Morven! draw near to the foes of Fingal. Send the night away in ſongs; and watch the ſtrength of Caros Oſcar goes to the people of other times; to the ſhades of ſilent Ardven; where his fathers ſit dim in their clouds, and behold the future war. And art thou there, Hidallan, like a half-extinguiſhed meteor? Come to my ſight, in thy ſorrow, chief of the roaring Balva!"

The heroes move with their ſongs. Oſcar ſlowly aſcends the hill. The meteors of night are ſetting on the heath before him. A diſtant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequented blaſts ruſh through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon ſinks dim and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath. Oſcar drew his ſword.

"Come," ſaid the hero, "O ye ghoſts of my fathers! ye that fought againſt the kings of the world! Tell me the deeds of future times; and your diſcourſe in your caves: when you talk together and behold your ſons in the fields of the valiant."

Trenmor came from his hill, at the voice of his mighty ſon. A cloud, like the ſteed of the ſtranger, ſupported his airy limbs. His robe is of the miſt of Lano, that brings death to the people. His ſword is a meteor half-extinguiſhed. His face is without form, and dark. He ſighed thrice over the hero: and thrice the winds of the night roared around. Many were his

words to Oſcar: but they only came by halves to our ears: they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light of the ſong aroſe. He ſlowly vaniſhed, like a miſt that melts on the ſunny hill. It was then, O daughter of Toſcar, my ſon begun firſt to be ſad. He foreſaw the fall of his race; and, at times, he was thoughtful and dark: like the ſun when he carries a cloud on his face: but he looks afterwards on the hills of Cona.

Oſcar paſſed the night among his fathers; gray morning met him on the banks of Carun. A green vale ſurrounded a tomb which aroſe in the times of old. Little hills lift their heads at a diſtance; and ſtretch their old trees to the wind. The warriors of Caros ſat there, for they had paſſed the ſtream by night. They appeared like the trunks of aged pines, to the pale light of the morning. Oſcar ſtood at the tomb and raiſed thrice his terrible voice. The rocking hills echoed around: the ſtarting roes bounded away. And the trembling ghoſts of the dead fled, ſhrieking on their clouds. So terrible was the voice of my ſon, when he called his friends.

A thouſand ſpears roſe around, the people of Caros roſe. Why, daughter of Toſcar, why that tear? My ſon, though alone, is brave. Oſcar is like a beam of the ſky; he turns around and the people fall. His hand is like the arm of a ghoſt, when he ſtretches it from a cloud; the reſt of his thin form is unſeen: but the people die in the vale! My ſon beheld the approach of the foe; and he ſtood in the ſilent darkneſs of his ſtrength. "Am I alone," ſaid Oſcar, "in the midſt of a thouſand foes! Many a ſpear is there! many a darkly rolling eye! Shall I fly to Ardven? But did my fathers ever fly! The mark of their arm is in a thouſand battles. Oſcar too will be renowned. Come, ye dim ghoſts of my fathers, and behold my deeds in war! I may fall; but I will be renowned like the race of the echoing Morven." He ſtood dilated in his place, like a flood ſwelling in a narrow vale. The battle came, but they fell: bloody was the ſword of Oſcar.

The noiſe reached his people at Crona; they came like a hundred ſtreams. The warriors of Caros fled, and Oſcar remained like a rock left by the ebbing ſea.

Now dark and deep, with all his ſteeds, Caros rolled his might along: the little ſtreams are loſt in his courſe; and the earth is rocking round. Battle ſpreads from wing to wing: ten thouſand ſwords gleam at once in the ſky. But why ſhould Oſſian ſing of battles? For never more ſhall my ſteel ſhine in war. I remember the days of my youth with ſorrow; when I feel the weakneſs of my arm Happy are they who fell in their youth, in the midſt of their renown! They have not beheld the tombs of their friends: or failed to bend the bow of their ſtrength. Happy art thou, O Oſcar, in the midſt of thy ruſhing blaſt. Thou often goeſt to the fields of thy fame, where Caros fled from thy lifted ſword.

Darkneſs comes on my ſoul, O fair daughter of Toſcar, I behold not the form of my ſon at Carun; nor the figure of Oſcar on Crona The ruſtling winds have carried him far away; and the heart of his father is ſad.

But lead me, O Malvina, to the ſound of my woods, and the roar of my mountain-ſtreams. Let the chaſe be heard on Cona; that I may think on the days of other years. And bring me the harp, O maid, that I may touch it when the light of my ſoul ſhall ariſe. Be thou near, to learn the ſong; and future times ſhall hear of Oſſian

The ſons of the feeble hereafter will lift the voice on Cona; and, looking up to the rocks, ſay, "Here Oſſian dwelt." They ſhall admire the chiefs of old, and the race that are no more: while we ride on our clouds, Malvina, on the wings of the roaring winds. Our voices ſhall be heard, at times, in the deſert; and we ſhall ſing on the winds of the rock.

THE

WAR OF INIS-THONA:

A POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

This poem is an epiſode, introduced in a great work compoſed by Oſſian, in which the actions of his friends, and his beloved ſon Oſcar, were interwoven. The work itſelf is loſt, but ſome epiſodes, and the ſtory of the poem, are handed down by tradition. Inis-thona was an iſland of Scandinavia, ſubject to its own king, but depending upon the kingdom of Lochlin.

OUR youth is like the dream of the hunter on the hill of heath. He ſleeps in the mild beams of the ſun; but he awakes amidſt a ſtorm; the red lightning flies around: and the trees ſhake their heads to the wind. He looks back with joy on the day of the ſun, and the pleaſant dreams of his reſt!

When ſhall Oſſian's youth return, or his ear delight in the ſound of arms? When ſhall I, like Oſcar, travel in the light of my ſteel? Come, with your ſtreams, ye hills of Cona, and liſten to the voice of Oſſian! The ſong riſes, like the ſun, in my ſoul; and my heart feels the joys of other times.

I behold thy towers, O Selma! and the oaks of thy ſhaded wall: thy ſtreams ſound in my ear; thy heroes gather round Fingal ſits in the midſt; and leans on the ſhield of Trenmor: his ſpear ſtands againſt the wall; he liſtens to the ſong of his bards. The deeds of his arm are heard; and the actions of the king in his youth.

Oſcar had returned from the chaſe, and heard the hero's praiſe. He took the ſhield of Branno † from the wall; his eyes were filled with tears. Red was the cheek of youth. His voice was trembling, low. My

† This is Branno, the father of Everallin, and grandfather to Oſcar; he was of Iriſh extraction, and lord of the country round the lake of Lego. His great actions are handed down by tradition, and his hoſpitality has paſſed into a proverb.

ſpear ſhook its bright head in his hand; he ſpoke to Morven's king.

"Fingal! thou king of heroes! Oſſian, next to him in war! ye have fought the battle in your youth; your names are renowned in ſong. Oſcar is like the miſt of Cona: I appear and vaniſh. The bard will not know my name. The hunter will not ſearch in the heath for my tomb. Let me fight, O heroes, in the battles of Inis-thona. Diſtant is the land of my war! ye ſhall not hear of Oſcar's fall. Some bard may find me there, and give my name to the ſong. The daughter of the ſtranger ſhall ſee my tomb, and weep over the youth that came from afar. The bard ſhall ſay, at the feaſt, hear the ſong of Oſcar from the diſtant land."

"Oſcar," replied the king of Morven; "thou ſhalt fight, ſon of my fame! Prepare my dark-boſomed ſhip to carry my hero to Inis-thona. Son of my ſon, regard our fame: for thou art of the race of renown. Let not the children of ſtrangers ſay, feeble are the ſons of Morven! Be thou in battle, like the roaring ſtorm: mild as the evening ſun in peace. Tell, Oſcar, to Inis-thona's king, that Fingal remembers his youth; when we ſtrove in the combat together in the days of Agandecca."

They lifted up the ſounding ſail; the wind whiſtled through the thongs † of their maſts. Waves laſhed the oozy rocks: the ſtrength of ocean roared. My ſon beheld, from the wave, the land of groves. He ruſhed into the echoing bay of Runa; and ſent his ſword to Annir king of ſpears. The gray-haired hero roſe, when he ſaw the ſword of Fingal. His eyes were full of tears; and he remembered the battles of their youth. Twice they lifted the ſpear before the lovely Agandecca: heroes ſtood far diſtant, as if two ghoſts contended.

"But now," begun the king, "I am old; the ſword lies uſeleſs in my hall. Thou art of Morven's race!

† Leather thongs were uſed in Oſſian's time, inſtead of ropes.

Annir has been in the ſtrife of ſpears; but he is pale and withered now, like the oak of Lano. I have no ſon to meet thee with joy, or to carry thee to the halls of his fathers. Argon is pale in the tomb, and Ruro is no more. My daughter is in the hall of ſtrangers, and longs to behold my tomb. Her ſpouſe ſhakes ten thouſand ſpears; and comes† like a cloud of death from Lano. Come thou to ſhare the feaſt of Annir, ſon of echoing Morven."

Three days they feaſted together; on the fourth Annir heard the name of Oſcar‖. They rejoiced in the ſhell¶; and purſued the boars of Runa. Beſide the fount of moſſy ſtones, the weary heroes reſt. The tear ſteals in ſecret from Annir: and he broke the riſing ſigh. "Here darkly reſt," the hero ſaid, "the children of my youth. This ſtone is the tomb of Ruro: that tree founds over the grave of Argon. Do ye hear my voice, O my ſons, within your narrow houſe? Or do ye ſpeak in theſe ruſtling leaves, when the winds of the deſert riſe?"

"King of Inis-thona," ſaid Oſcar, "how fell the children of youth? The wild-boar often ruſhes over their tombs, but he does not diſturb the hunters. They purſue deer§ formed of clouds, and bend their airy-bow. They ſtill love the ſport of their youth; and mount the wind with joy."

† Cormalo had reſolved on a war againſt his father-in-law, Annir, king of Inis-thona, in order to deprive him of his kingdom; the injuſtice of his deſigns was ſo much reſented by Fingal, that he ſent his grandſon, Oſcar, to the aſſiſtance of Annir. Both armies came ſoon to a battle, in which the conduct and valour of Oſcar obtained a complete victory. An end was put to the war by the death of Cormalo, who fell in a ſingle combat, by Oſcar's hand. Thus is the ſtory delivered down by tradition; though the poet, to raiſe the character of his ſon, makes Oſcar himſelf propoſe the expedition.

‖ It was thought, in thoſe days of heroiſm, an infringement upon the laws of hoſpitality, to aſk the name of a ſtranger, before he had feaſted three days in the great hall of the family. 'He that aſks the name of a ſtranger,' is to this day, an opprobious term, applied, in the north, to the inhoſpitable.

¶ 'To rejoice in the ſhell' is a phraſe for feaſting ſumptuouſly, and drinking freely.

§ The notion of Oſſian concerning the ſtate of the deceaſed, was the ſame with that of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They imagined that the ſouls purſued, in their ſeparate ſtate, the employments and pleaſures of their former life.

"Cormalo," replied the king, "is chief of ten thouſand ſpears; he dwells at the dark-rolling waters of Lano†; which ſend forth the cloud of death. He came to Runa's echoing halls, and ſought the honour of the ſpear‖. The youth was lovely as the firſt beam of the ſun! and few were they who could meet him in fight! My heroes yielded to Cormalo: and my daughter loved the ſon of Lano. Argon and Ruro returned from the chaſe; the tears of their pride deſcended: They rolled their ſilent eyes on Runa's heroes, becauſe they yielded to a ſtranger: three days they feaſted with Cormalo: on the fourth my Argon fought. But who could fight with Argon? Lano's chief was overcome. His heart ſwelled with the grief of pride, and he reſolved in ſecret to behold the death of my ſons. They went to the hills of Runa, and purſued the dark-brown hinds. The arrow of Cormalo flew in ſecret; and my children fell. He came to the maid of his love; to Inis-thona's dark-haired maid. They fled over the deſert, and Annir remained alone. Night came on, and day appeared; nor Argon's voice, nor Ruro's came. At length their much-lov'd dog is ſeen; the fleet and bounding Runar. He came into the hall and howled; and ſeemed to look towards the place of their fall. We followed him: we found them here: and laid them by this moſſy ſtream. This is the haunt of Annir, when the chaſe of the hinds is over. I bend like the trunk of an aged oak above them: and my tears for ever flow."

"O Ronnan!" ſaid the riſing Oſcar, "Ogar king of ſpears! call my heroes to my ſide, the ſons of ſtreamy Morven. To-day we go to Lano's water, that ſends forth the cloud of death. Cormalo will not long rejoice: death is often at the point of our ſwords."

† Lano was a lake of Scandinavia, remarkable in the days of Oſſian, for emitting a peſtilential vapour in autumn. "And thou, O valiant Duchomar, like the miſt of marſhy Lano: when it fails over the plains of autumn, and brings death to the people." Fingal, B. I.

‖ By the honour of the ſpear is meant a kind of tournament practiſed among the ancient northern nations.

They came over the deſert like ſtormy clouds, when the winds roll them over the heath: their edges are tinged with lightning: and the echoing groves foreſee the ſtorm. The horn of Oſcar's battle was heard; and Lano ſhook in all its waves. The children of the lake convened around the ſounding ſhield of Cormalo. Oſcar fought, as he was wont in battle. Cormalo fell beneath his ſword: and the ſons of the diſmal Lano fled to their ſecret vales. Oſcar brought the daughter of Inis-thona to Annir's echoing halls. The face of age was bright with joy; he bleſt the king of ſwords.

How great was the joy of Oſſian, when he beheld the diſtant ſail of his ſon! it was like a cloud of light that riſes in the eaſt, when the traveller is ſad in a land unknown; and diſmal night, with her ghoſts, is ſitting around him. We brought him, with ſongs, to Selma's halls. Fingal ordered the feaſt of ſhells to be ſpread. A thouſand bards raiſed the name of Oſcar: and Morven anſwered to the noiſe. The daughter of Toſcar was there, and her voice was like the harp; when the diſtant ſound comes, in the evening, on the ſoft ruſtling breeze of the vale.

O lay me, ye that ſee the light, near ſome rock of my hills; let the thick hazels be around, let the ruſtling oak be near. Green be the place of my reſt; and let the ſound of the diſtant torrent be heard. Daughter of Toſcar, take the harp, and raiſe the lovely ſong of Selma: that ſleep may overtake my ſoul in the midſt of joy; that the dreams of my youth may return, and the days of the mighty Fingal. Selma! I behold thy towers, thy trees, and ſhaded wall. I ſee the heroes of Morven: and hear the ſong of bards. Oſcar lifts the ſword of Cormalo; and a thouſand youths admire its ſtudded thongs. They look with wonder on my ſon! and admire the ſtrength of his arm. They mark the joy of his father's eyes; they long for an equal fame. And ye ſhall have your fame, O ſons of ſtreamy Morven. My ſoul is often brightened with the ſong; and

I remember the companions of my youth. But ſleep deſcends with the ſound of the harp; and pleaſant dreams begin to riſe. Ye ſons of the chaſe ſtand far diſtant, nor diſturb my reſt. The bard of other times converſes now with his fathers, the chiefs of the days of old. Sons of the chaſe ſtand far diſtant; diſturb not the dreams of Oſſian.

THE

BATTLE OF LORA:

A POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Fingal, on his return from Ireland, after he had expelled Swaran, from that kingdom, made a feaſt to all his heroes: he forgot to invite Ma-ronnan and Aldo, two chiefs, who had not been along with him on his expedition. They reſented his neglect: and went over to Erragon king of Sora, a country of Scandinavia, the declared enemy of Fingal. The valour of Aldo ſoon gained him a great reputation in Sora; and Lorma the beautiful wife of Erragon fell in love with him. He found means to eſcape with her, and to come to Fingal, who reſided then in Selma on the weſtern coaſt. Erragon invaded Scotland, and was ſlain in battle by Gaul the ſon of Morni, after he had rejected terms of peace offered him by Fingal. In this war Aldo fell in a ſingle combat, by the hands of his rival Erragon; and the unfortunate Lorma afterwards died of grief.

SON of the diſtant land, who dwelleſt in the ſecret cell! do I hear the ſounds of thy grove? or is it the voice of thy ſongs? The torrent was loud in my ear, but I heard a tuneful voice; doſt thou praiſe the chiefs of thy land; or the ſpirits † of the wind! But, lonely dweller of the rocks! look over that heathy plain: thou ſeeſt green tombs, with their rank, whiſtling graſs; with their ſtones of moſſy heads: thou ſeeſt them, ſon of the rock; but Oſſian's eyes have failed.

A mountain-ſtream comes roaring down and ſends its waters round a green hill: four moſſy ſtones, in the midſt of withered graſs, rear their heads on the top: two trees which the ſtorms have bent, ſpread their whiſtling branches around. This is thy dwelling, Erragon ‖; this thy narrow houſe; the ſound of thy ſhell has been long forgot in Sora: and thy ſhield is become dark in thy hall. Erragon, king of ſhips! chief of di-

† The poet alludes to the religious hymns of the Culdees.

‖ Erragon, or Ferg-thoun, ſignifies the race of the waves: probably a poetical name given him by Oſſian himſelf; for he goes by the name of Annir in tradition.

ſtant Sora! how haſt thou fallen on our mountains? How is the mighty low? Son of the ſecret cell! doſt thou delight in ſongs? Hear the battle of Lora: the ſound of its ſteel is long ſince paſt. So thunder on the darkened hill roars and is no more. The ſun returns with his ſilent beams: the glittering rocks, and green heads of the mountains ſmile.

The bay of Cona received our ſhips†, from Ullin's rolling waves: our white ſheets hung looſe to the maſts: and the boiſterous winds roared through the groves of Morven. The horn of the king is ſounded, and the deer ſtart from their rocks. Our arrows flew in the woods: the feaſt of the hill was ſpread. Our joy was great on our rocks, for the fall of the terrible Swaran. Two heroes were forgot at our feaſt; and the rage of their boſoms burned. They rolled their red eyes in ſecret: the ſigh burſts from their breaſts. They are ſeen to talk together, and to throw their ſpears on earth. They were two dark clouds in the midſt of our joy; like pillars of miſt on the ſettled ſea: it glitters to the ſun, but the mariners fear a ſtorm.

"Raiſe my white ſails," ſaid Ma-ronnan, "raiſe them to the winds of the weſt; let us ruſh, O Aldo, through the foam of the northern wave. We are forgot at the feaſt: but our arms have been red in blood. Let us leave the hills of Fingal, and ſerve the king of Sora. His countenance is fierce, and the war darkens round his ſpear. Let us be renowned, O Aldo, in the battles of echoing Sora."

They took their ſwords and ſhields of thongs: and ruſhed to Lumar's ſounding bay. They came to Sora's haughty king, the chief of bounding ſteeds. Erragon had returned from the chaſe: his ſpear was red in blood. He bent his dark face to the ground; and whiſtled as he went. He took the ſtrangers to his feaſts: and they fought and conquered in his wars.

Aldo returned with his fame towards Sora's lofty

† This was at Fingal's return from his war againſt Swaran.

walls. From her tower looked the ſpouſe of Erragon, the humid, rolling eyes of Lorma. Her dark-brown hair flies on the wind of ocean: her white breaſt heaves, like ſnow on the heath; when the gentle winds ariſe, and ſlowly move it in the light. She ſaw young Aldo, like the beam of Sora's ſetting ſun. Her ſoft heart ſighed: tears filled her eyes; and her white arm ſupported her head. Three days ſhe ſat within the hall, and covered grief with joy. On the fourth ſhe fled with the hero, along the rolling ſea. They came to Cona's moſſy towers, to Fingal king of ſpears.

"Aldo of the heart of pride!" ſaid the riſing king of Morven, "ſhall I defend thee from the wrath of Sora's injured king? Who will now receive my people into their halls, or give the feaſt of ſtrangers, ſince Aldo of the little ſoul, has carried away the fair of Sora? Go to thy hills, thou feeble hand, and hide thee in thy caves; mournful is the battle we muſt fight, with Sora's gloomy king. Spirit of the noble Trenmor! when will Fingal ceaſe to fight? I was born in the midſt of battles†, and my ſteps muſt move in blood to my tomb. But my hand did not injure the weak, my ſteel did not touch the feeble in arms. I behold thy tempeſts, O Morven, which will overturn my halls; when my children are dead in battle, and none remains to dwell in Selma. Then will the feeble come, but they will not know my tomb: my renown is in the ſong: and my actions ſhall be as a dream to future times."

His people gathered around Erragon, as the ſtorms round the ghoſt of night; when he calls them from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the ſtranger. He came to the ſhore of Cona, and ſent his bard to the king; to demand the combat of thouſands: or the land of many hills. Fingal ſat in his hall with the companions of his youth around

† Comhal the father of Fingal was ſlain in battle, againſt the tribe of Morni, the very day that Fingal was born; ſo that he may, with propriety, be ſaid to have "been born in the midſt of battles."

him. The young heroes were at the chaſe, and far diſtant in the deſert. The gray-haired chiefs talked of other times, and of the actions of their youth; when the aged Narthmor † came, the king of ſtreamy Lora.

"This is no time," begun the chief, "to hear the ſongs of other years: Erragon frowns on the coaſt, and lifts ten thouſand ſwords. Gloomy is the king among his chiefs! he is like the darkened moon, amidſt the meteors of night."

"Come," ſaid Fingal, "from thy hall, thou daughter of my love; come from thy hall, Boſmina ‖, maid of ſtreamy Morven! Narthmor, take the ſteeds ¶ of the ſtrangers, and attend the daughter of Fingal: let her bid the king of Sora to our feaſt, to Selma's ſhaded wall. Offer him, O Boſmina, the peace of heroes, and the wealth of generous Aldo: our youths are far diſtant, and age is on our trembling hands."

She came to the hoſt of Erragon, like a beam of light to a cloud. In her right hand ſhone an arrow of gold; and in her left a ſparkling ſhell, the ſign of Morven's peace. Erragon brightened in her preſence as a rock before the ſudden beams of the ſun; when they iſſue from a broken cloud, divided by the roaring wind.

"Son of the diſtant Sora," begun the mildly bluſhing maid, "come to the feaſt of Morven's king, to Selma's ſhaded walls. Take the peace of heroes, O warrior, and let the dark ſword reſt by thy ſide. And if thou chuſeſt the wealth of kings, hear the words of the generous Aldo. He gives to Erragon an hundred ſteeds, the children of the rein; an hundred maids from diſtant lands; an hundred hawks with fluttering wing, that fly acroſs the ſky. An hundred girdles § ſhall al-

† Neart-mor, 'great ſtrength.' Lora, 'noiſy.'

‖ Boſ-mhina, 'ſoft and tender hand.' She was the youngeſt of Fingal's children.

¶ Theſe were probably horſes taken in the incurſions of the Caledonians into the Roman province, which ſeems to be intimated in the phraſe of "the ſteeds of ſtrangers."

§ Sanctified girdles, till very lately, were kept in many families in the north of Scotland; they were bound about women in labour, and were ſuppoſed to alleviate their pains, and to accelerate the birth. They were impreſſed with ſeveral myſtic

ſo be thine, to bind high-boſomed women; the friends of the births of heroes, and the cure of the ſons of toil. Ten ſhells ſtudded with gems ſhall ſhine in Sora's towers: the blue water trembles on their ſtars, and ſeems to be ſparkling wine. They gladdened once the kings of the world †, in the midſt of their echoing halls. Theſe, O hero, ſhall be thine; or thy white-boſomed ſpouſe. Lorma ſhall roll her bright eyes in thy halls; though Fingal loves the generous Aldo: Fingal! who never injured a hero, though his arm is ſtrong."

"Soft voice of Cona!" replied the king, "tell him, that he ſpreads his feaſt in vain. Let Fingal pour his ſpoils around me; and bend beneath my power. Let him give me the ſwords of his fathers, and the ſhields of other times: that my children may behold them in my halls, and ſay, *Theſe are the arms of Fingal.*"

"Never ſhall they behold them in thy halls," ſaid the riſing pride of the maid. "They are in the mighty hands of heroes who never yielded in war. King of the echoing Sora! the ſtorm is gathering on our hills. Doſt thou not foreſee the fall of thy people, ſon of the diſtant land?"

She came to Selma's ſilent halls; the king beheld her down-caſt eyes. He roſe from his place, in his ſtrength, and ſhook his aged locks. He took the ſounding mail of Trenmor, and the dark-brown ſhield of his fathers. Darkneſs filled Selma's hall, when he ſtretched his hand to his ſpear: the ghoſts of thouſands were near, and foreſaw the death of the people. Terrible joy roſe in the face of the aged heroes: they ruſhed to meet the foe; their thoughts are on the actions of other years; and on the fame of the tomb.

Now the dogs of the chaſe appeared at Trathal's tomb: Fingal knew that his young heroes followed them, and he ſtopt in the midſt of his courſe. Oſcar appeared the firſt; then Morni's ſon, and Nemi's race:

cal figures, and the ceremony of binding them about the woman's waiſt, was accompanied with words and geſtures which ſhewed the cuſtom to have come originally from the druids.

† The Roman emperors. Theſe ſhells were ſome of the ſpoils of the province.

Fercuth † ſhewed his gloomy form: Dermid ſpread his dark hair on the wind. Oſſian came the laſt. I hummed the ſong of other times: my ſpear ſupported my ſteps over the little ſtreams, and my thoughts were of mighty men. Fingal ſtruck his boſſy ſhield; and gave the diſmal ſign of war; a thouſand ſwords, at once unſheathed, gleam on the waving heath. Three gray-haired ſons of ſong raiſe the tuneful, mournful voice. Deep and dark with ſounding ſteps, we ruſh, a gloomy ridge, along: like the ſhower of a ſtorm, when it pours on the narrow vale.

The king of Morven ſat on his hill: the ſun-beam of battle flew on the wind: the companions of his youth are near, with all their waving locks of age. Joy roſe in the hero's eyes when he beheld his ſons in war; when he ſaw them amidſt the lightning of ſwords, and mindful of the deeds of their fathers. Erragon came on, in his ſtrength, like the roar of a winter-ſtream; the battle falls in his courſe, and death is at his ſide.

"Who comes," ſaid Fingal, "like the bounding roe, like the hart of echoing Cona? His ſhield glitters on his ſide; and the clang of his armour is mournful. He meets with Erragon in the ſtrife! Behold the battle of the chiefs! it is like the contending of ghoſts in a gloomy ſtorm. But falleſt thou, ſon of the hill, and is thy white boſom ſtained with blood? Weep, unhappy Lorma, Aldo is no more!"

The king took the ſpear of his ſtrength; for he was ſad for the fall of Aldo: he bent his deathful eyes on the foe: but Gaul met the king of Sora. Who can relate the fight of the chiefs? The mighty ſtranger fell.

"Sons of Cona!" Fingal cried aloud, "ſtop the hand of death. Mighty was he that is now ſo low? and much is he mourned in Sora! The ſtranger will come towards his hall, and wonder why it is ſilent. The king is fallen, O ſtranger, and the joy of his houſe

† Fear-cuth, the ſame with Fergus, 'the man of the word,' or a commander of an army.

is ceaſed. Liſten to the ſound of his woods: perhaps his ghoſt is there; but he is far diſtant, on Morven, beneath the ſword of a foreign foe." Such were the words of Fingal, when the bard raiſed the ſong of peace; we ſtopped our uplifted ſwords, and ſpared the feeble foe. We laid Erragon in that tomb; and I raiſed the voice of grief: the clouds of night came rolling down, and the ghoſt of Erragon appeared to ſome. His face was cloudy and dark; and an half-formed ſigh is in his breaſt. Bleſt be thy ſoul, O king of Sora! thine arm was terrible in war!

Lorma ſat, in Aldo's hall, at the light of a flaming oak: the night came, but he did not return; and the ſoul of Lorma is ſad. "What detains thee, hunter of Cona? for thou didſt promiſe to return. Has the deer been diſtant far; and do the dark winds ſigh, round thee, on the heath? I am in the land of ſtrangers, where is my friend? But Aldo, come from thy echoing hills, O my beſt beloved!"

Her eyes are turned toward the gate, and ſhe liſtens to the ruſtling blaſt. She thinks it is Aldo's tread and joy riſes in her face: but ſorrow returns again, like a thin cloud on the moon. "And wilt thou not return, my love? Let me behold the face of the hill. The moon is in the eaſt. Calm and bright is the breaſt of the lake! When ſhall I behold his dogs returning from the chaſe? When ſhall I hear his voice, loud and diſtant on the wind? Come from thy echoing hills, hunter of woody Cona!"

His thin ghoſt appeared, on a rock, like the watry beam of the moon, when it ruſhes from between two clouds, and the midnight ſhower is on the field. She followed the empty form over the heath, for ſhe knew that her hero fell. I heard her approaching cries on the wind, like the mournful voice of the breeze, when it ſighs on the graſs of the cave.

She came, ſhe found her hero: her voice was heard no more; ſilent ſhe rolled her ſad eyes; ſhe was pale as a watry cloud, that riſes from the lake, to the beam

of the moon. Few were her days on Cona: ſhe ſunk into the tomb: Fingal commanded his bards; and they ſung over the death of Lorma. The daughters of Morven mourned her for one day in the year, when the dark winds of autumn returned.

Son of the diſtant land †! thou dwelleſt in the field of fame: O let thy ſong riſe, at times, in the praiſe of thoſe that fell: that their thin ghoſts may rejoice around thee; and the ſoul of Lorma come on a moon-beam ‖, when thou lieſt down to reſt, and the moon looks into thy cave. Then ſhalt thou ſee her lovely; but the tear is ſtill on her cheek.

† The poet addreſſes himſelf to the Culdee.

‖ "Be thou a moon-beam, O Morna, near the window of my reſt; when my thoughts are of peace and the din of arms is over." Fingal, B. I.

CONLATH AND CUTHONA:

A POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Conlath was the youngeſt of Morni's ſons, and brother to the celebrated Gaul, who is ſo often mentioned in Oſſian's poems. He was in love with Cuthona the daughter of Rumar, when Toſcar the ſon of Kinfena, accompanied by Fercuth his friend, arrived, from Ireland, at Mora where Conlath dwelt. He was hoſpitably received, and according to the cuſtom of the times, feaſted three days with Conlath. On the fourth he ſet ſail, and coaſting the iſland of waves, probably, one of the Hebrides, he ſaw Cuthona hunting, fell in love with her, and carried her away, by force, in his ſhip. He was forced, by ſtreſs of weather, into I-thona a deſert iſle. In the mean time Conlath hearing of the rape, ſailed after him, and found him on the point of ſailing for the coaſt of Ireland. They fought; and they, and their followers fell by mutual wounds. Cuthona did not long ſurvive; for ſhe died of grief the third day after. Fingal, hearing of their unfortunate death, ſent Stormal the ſon of Moran to bury them, but forgot to ſend a bard to ſing the funeral ſong over their tombs. The ghoſt of Conlath came, long after, to Oſſian, to entreat him to tranſmit to poſterity, his and Cuthona's fame. For it was the opinion of the times, that the ſouls of the deceaſed were not happy, till their elegies were compoſed by a bard.

DID not Oſſian hear a voice? or is it the ſound of days that are no more? Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening ſun, on my ſoul. The noiſe of the chaſe is renewed; and, in thought, I lift the ſpear. But Oſſian did hear a voice: Who art thou, ſon of the night? The ſons of little men are aſleep, and the midnight wind is in my hall. Perhaps it is the ſhield of Fingal that echoes to the blaſt: it hangs in Oſſian's hall, and he feels it ſometimes with his hands. Yes! I hear thee, my friend: long has thy voice been abſent from mine ear! What brings thee, on thy cloud, to Oſſian, ſon of the generous Morni! Are the friends of the aged near thee? Where is Oſcar, ſon of fame? He was often near thee, O Conlath, when the din of battle roſe.

Ghoſt of Conlath. Sleeps the ſweet voice of Cona, in the midſt of his ruſtling hall? Sleeps Oſſian in his hall, and his friends without their fame? The ſea rolls

round the dark I-thona†, and our tombs are not ſeen by the ſtranger. How long ſhall our fame be unheard ſon of the echoing Morven?

Oſſian. O that mine eyes could behold thee, as thou ſitteſt, dim, on thy cloud! Art thou like the miſt of Lano; or an half-extinguiſhed meteor? Of what are the ſkirts of thy robe? Of what is thine airy bow? But he is gone on his blaſt like the ſhadow of miſt. Come from thy wall, my harp, and let me hear thy ſound. Let the light of memory riſe on I-thona; that I may behold my friends. And Oſſian does behold his friends, on the dark-blue iſle. The cave of Thona appears, with its moſſy rocks and bending trees. A ſtream roars at its mouth, and Toſcar bends over its courſe. Fercuth is ſad by his ſide: and the maid¶ of his love ſits at a diſtance and weeps. Does the wind of the waves deceive me? Or do I hear them ſpeak?

Toſcar. The night was ſtormy. From their hills the groaning oaks came down. The ſea darkly-tumbled beneath the blaſt, and the roaring waves were climbing againſt our rocks. The lightning came often and ſhewed the blaſted fern. Fercuth! I ſaw the ghoſt of night‖. Silent he ſtood, on taht bank; his robe of miſt flew on the wind. I could behold his tears: an aged man he ſeemed, and full of thought.

Fercuth. It was thy father, O Toſcar; and he foreſees ſome death among his race. Such was his appearance on Cromla, before the great Ma-ronnan‡ fell. Ullin!§ with thy hills of graſs, how pleaſant are thy vales! Silence is near thy blue ſtreams, and the ſun is on thy fields. Soft is the ſound of the harp in Selama*, and pleaſant the cry of the hunter on Crom-

† I-thona, 'iſland of waves,' one of the uninhabited weſtern iſles.

¶ Cuthona the daughter of Rumar, whom Toſcar had carried away by force.

‖ It was long thought, in the north of Scotland, that ſtorms were raiſed by the ghoſts of the deceaſed. This notion is ſtill entertained by the vulgar; for they think that whirlwinds, and ſudden ſqualls of wind are occaſioned by ſpirits, who tranſport themſelves, in that manner, from one place to another.

‡ Ma-ronnan was the brother of Toſcar.

§ Ulſter in Ireland.

* Selamath---'beautiful to behold,' the name of Toſcar's palace, on the coaſt of Ulſter, near the mountain Cromla, the ſcene of the epic poem.

la. But we are in the dark I-thona, ſurrounded by the ſtorm. The billows lift their white heads above our rocks: and we tremble amidſt the night.

Toſcar. Whither is the ſoul of battle fled, Fercuth with the locks of age? I have ſeen thee undaunted in danger, and thine eyes burning with joy in the fight. Whither is the ſoul of battle fled? Our fathers never feared. Go: view the ſettling ſea: the ſtormy wind is laid. The billows ſtill tremble on the deep, and ſeem to fear the blaſt. But view the ſettling ſea: morning is gray on our rocks The ſun will look ſoon from his eaſt; in all his pride of light. I lifted up my ſails, with joy, before the halls of generous Conlath My courſe was by the iſle of waves, where his love purſued the deer. I ſaw her, like that beam of the ſun that iſſues from the cloud. Her hair was on her heaving breaſt; ſhe, bending forward, drew the bow: her white arm ſeemed, behind her, like the ſnow of Cromla. Come to my ſoul, I ſaid, thou huntreſs of the iſle of waves! But ſhe ſpends her time in tears, and thinks of the generous Conlath. Where can I find thy peace, Cuthona, lovely maid?

Cuthona.† A diſtant ſteep bends over the ſea, with aged trees and moſſy rocks: the billows roll at its feet: on its ſide is the dwelling of roes. The people call it Ardven. There the towers of Mora riſe. There Conlath looks over the ſea for his only love. The daughters of the chaſe returned, and he beheld their downcaſt eyes. Where is the daughter of Rumar? But they anſwered not. My peace dwells on Ardven, ſon of the diſtant land!

Toſcar. And Cuthona ſhall return to her peace; to the halls of generous Conlath. He is the friend of Toſcar: I have feaſted in his halls. Riſe, ye gentle breezes of Ullin, and ſtretch my ſails towards Ardven's ſhores. Cuthona ſhall reſt on Ardven: but the days

† Cuthona, 'the mournful ſound of the waves; a poetical name given her by Oſſian, on account of her mourning to the ſound of the waves; her name, in tradition, is Corm-hail, 'the blue-eyed maid.'

of Toſcar will be ſad I ſhall ſit in my cave in the field of the ſun. The blaſt will ruſtle in my trees, and I ſhall think it is Cuthona's voice. But ſhe is diſtant far, in the halls of the mighty Conlath.

Cuthona. Oh! what cloud is that? It carries the ghoſts of my fathers, I ſee the ſkirts of their robes, like gray and watry miſt. When ſhall I fall, O Rumar? Sad Cuthona ſees her death. Will not Conlath behold me, before I enter the narrow houſe †?

Oſſian. And he will behold thee, O maid: he comes along the rolling ſea. The death of Toſcar is dark on his ſpear; and a wound is in his ſide. He is pale at the cave of Thona, and ſhews his ghaſtly wound. Where art thou with thy tears, Cuthona? the chief of Mora dies. The viſion grows dim on my mind: I behold the chiefs no more. But, O ye bards of future times, remember the fall of Conlath with tears: he fell before his day; and ſadneſs darkened in his hall. His mother looked to his ſhield on the wall, and it was bloody ‖. She knew that her hero died, and her ſorrow was heard on Mora. Art thou pale on thy rock, Cuthona, beſide the fallen chiefs? Night comes, and day returns, but none appears to raiſe their tomb. Thou frighteneſt the ſcreaming fowls away, and thy tears for ever flow. Thou art pale as a watry cloud, that riſes from a lake.

The ſons of the deſert came, and they found her dead. They raiſe a tomb over the heroes; and ſhe reſts at the ſide of Conlath. Come not to my dreams, O Conlath; for thou haſt received thy fame. Be thy voice far diſtant from my hall; that ſleep may deſcend at night. O that I could forget my friends; till my footſteps ceaſe to be ſeen! till I come among them with joy! and lay my aged limbs in the narrow houſe!

† The grave.

‖ It was the opinion of the times, that the arms left by the heroes at home, became bloody the very inſtant their owners were killed, though at ever ſo great a diſtance.

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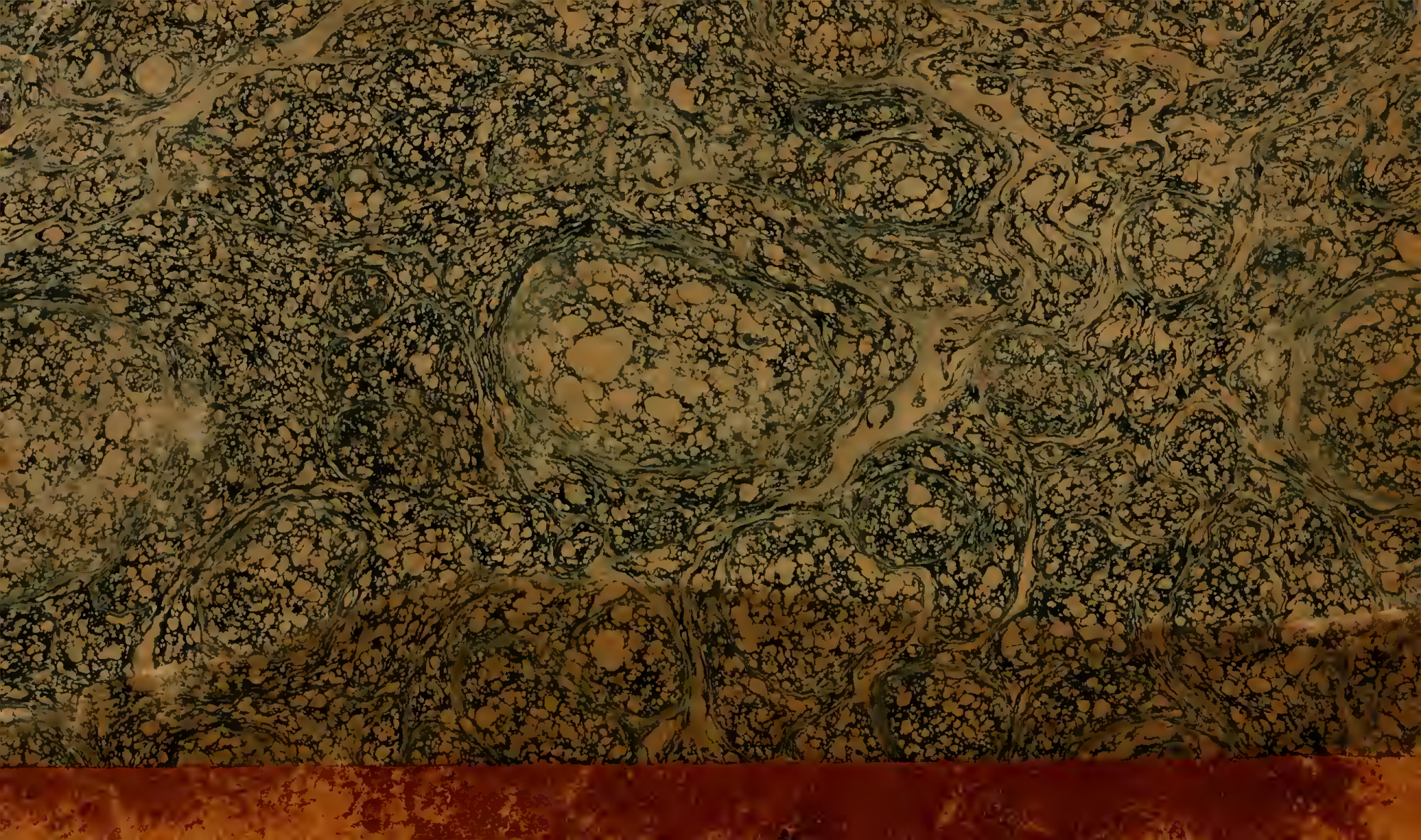
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